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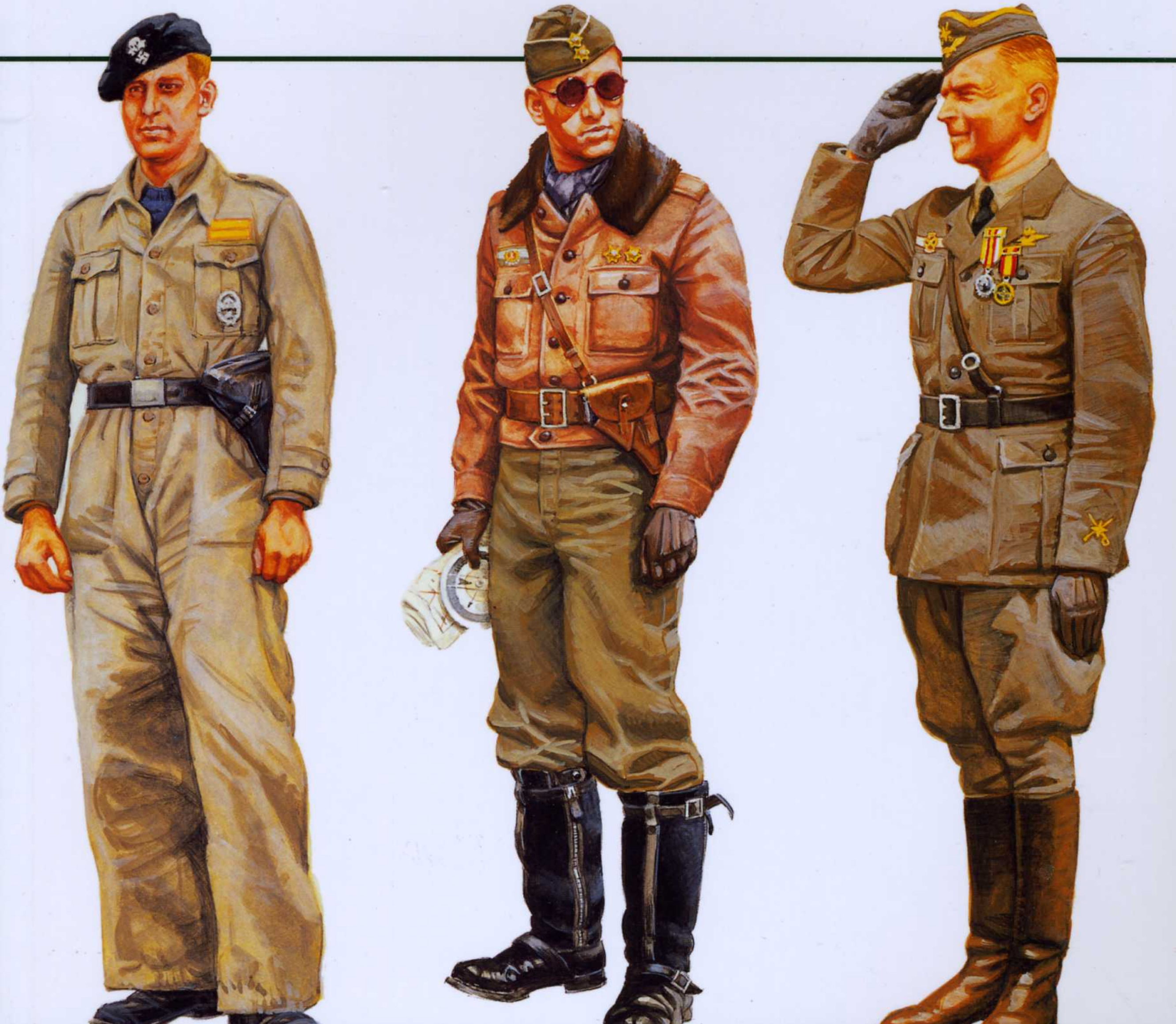
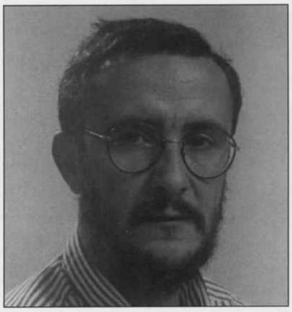
The Condor Legion

German Troops in the Spanish Civil War



Carlos Caballero Jurado • Illustrated by Ramiro Bujeiro



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The Condor Legion

German Troops in the Spanish Civil War

Carlos Caballero Jurado • Illustrated by Ramiro Bujeiro

Consultant editor Martin Windrow

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THE CONDOR LEGION

ORIGINS

From July 1936 to April 1939 the attention of much of the Western world was focused on the Spanish Civil War, which seemed to many to represent the first major armed clash between the rival ideologies of the Left and Right, whose mutual hostility dominated the international scene.

The military coup that took place in Spain in July 1936 was supported by a wide spectrum of political and social forces, with one thing in common: all were opposed to left-wing revolution, anti-clericalism, and regional separatism. The sudden abdication of King Alfonso XIII, and the proclamation of the Second Republic in April 1931, were apparently endorsed in the elections of that June; but Spain lacked democratic institutions or traditions capable of holding the country together while the new government – quite unready for such a task – tried to work out a coherent programme of achievable political goals. In the February 1936 elections the conservative CEDA party was defeated and a Popular Front government was installed, representing a coalition of groups whose agendas ranged from moderate socialist reform to full-blooded Bolshevism; allied with these were separatist parties, particularly from Catalonia and the Basque country. The main left-wing parties were the Socialist PSOE, Anarchist CNT, Stalinist PCE and Trotskyite POUM; and from among these factions calls arose for an end to the experiment with 'bourgeois democracy' and for the establishment of a 'government of workers and peasants'. The right-wing political forces (Catholics, agrarians, monarchists, and also the small Spanish Fascist party – the Falange Española, FE) were not ready to tolerate any kind of Bolshevik experience in Spain, nor to allow the break-up of the country. Both the Left and the Right, each for their own reasons, had abandoned belief in the democratic system as a desirable and efficient form of government.

The weak and divided administration was helpless to control bloody provocations by both camps; an imminent Communist coup was rumoured; and on 17–19 July a group of senior army officers took the irrevocable step. Military uprisings broke out in all the main garrison towns of Spain and her off-shore territories.[1]

Although the causes of the Civil War were intimately grounded in Spanish domestic affairs, this conflict crossed frontiers very quickly due to the extreme political polarization

Portrait of an Unteroffizier serving with the Condor Legion. His khaki-brown *Fliegermütze* and lighter khaki shirt both display the two gold bars of his roughly equivalent Spanish rank of *brigada*; the black cloth background to the bars indicates that he is attached to S88, the Condor Legion headquarters staff. (Campesino)

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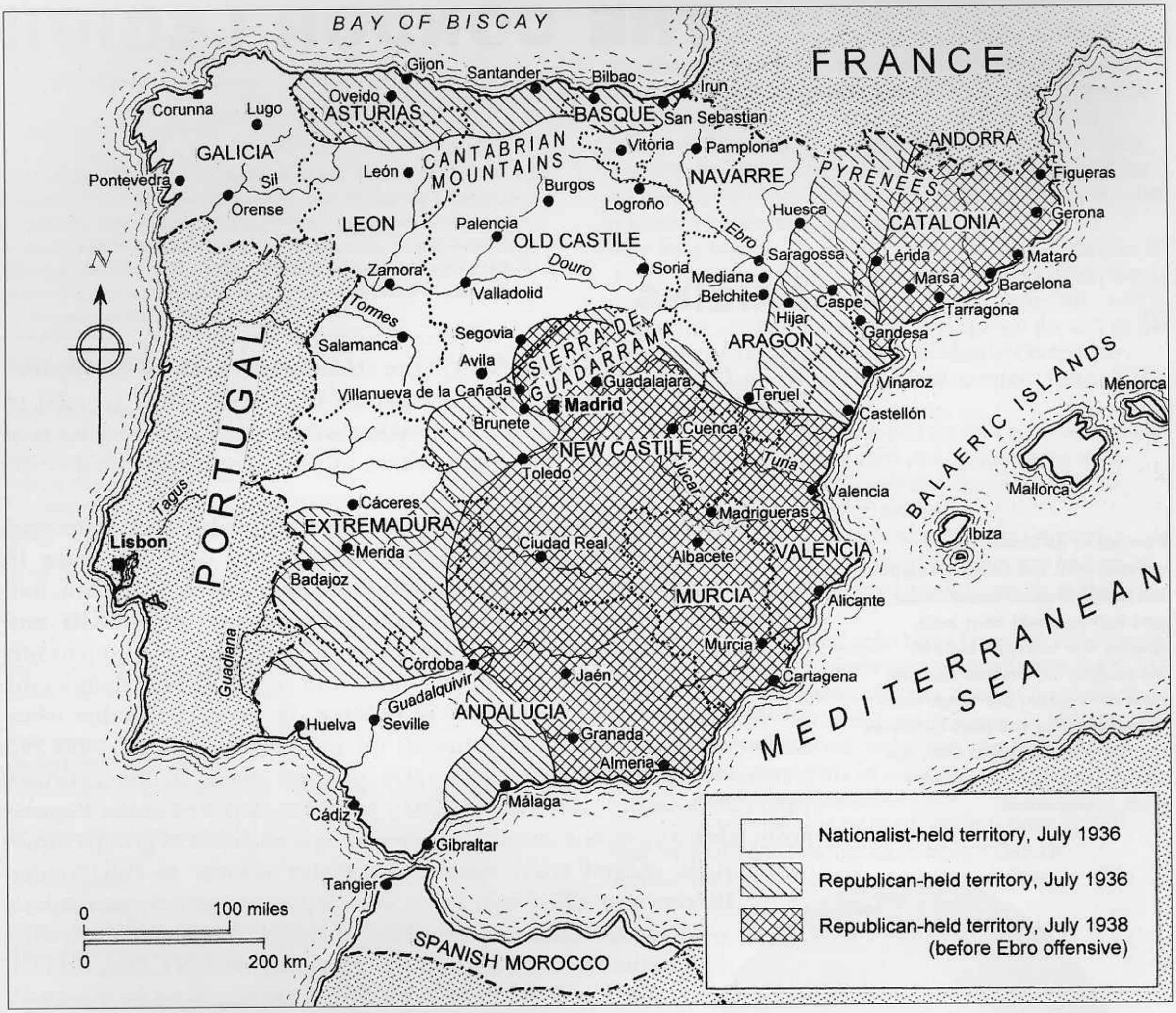
[1] See Men-at-Arms 74, *The Spanish Civil War 1936–39*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Jaén
Cartagena
Guadalquivir
ANDALUCIA
Huelva
Seville
Granada
Almeria
Málaga
Cádiz
Gibraltar
Tangier
SPANISH MOROCCO
0
100 miles
0
200 km
Nationalist-held territory, July 1936
Republican-held territory, July 1936
Republican-held territory, July 1938 (before Ebro offensive)

of Europe during the inter-war period. In most European countries the active members of both Communist and Fascist parties were only a minority, but public opinion was more generally divided between anti-Fascists and anti-Communists. In Spain in 1936 the supporters of the Falange Española and the Spanish Communist Party scarcely numbered more than a few thousand; but all the different right-wing forces were strongly and actively anti-Communist, while all the elements forming the left wing were openly anti-Fascist. Therefore, at the outbreak of the Civil War, the rebels declared that they had risen 'against Communism', while their enemies said that they were fighting 'against Fascism'. The rebels called themselves *Nacionales* (Nationalists), although to their enemies they were simply the *Fascistas*; the defenders of the Popular Front called themselves *Republicanos*, but the rebels called them *Rojos* ('Reds').

Foreign sympathizers and aid

Inevitably, these oversimplified views of the two sides were shared outside Spain. Some foreigners saw the Spanish Civil War as a crusade against Communism, while others interpreted it as a decisive fight against the advance of Fascism. The great European powers took different positions:

the Western democracies followed a non-intervention policy, Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy decided on active support for the Nationalists, while the Soviet Union sent substantial aid to the Republicans. This military support was to be decisive for both sides.

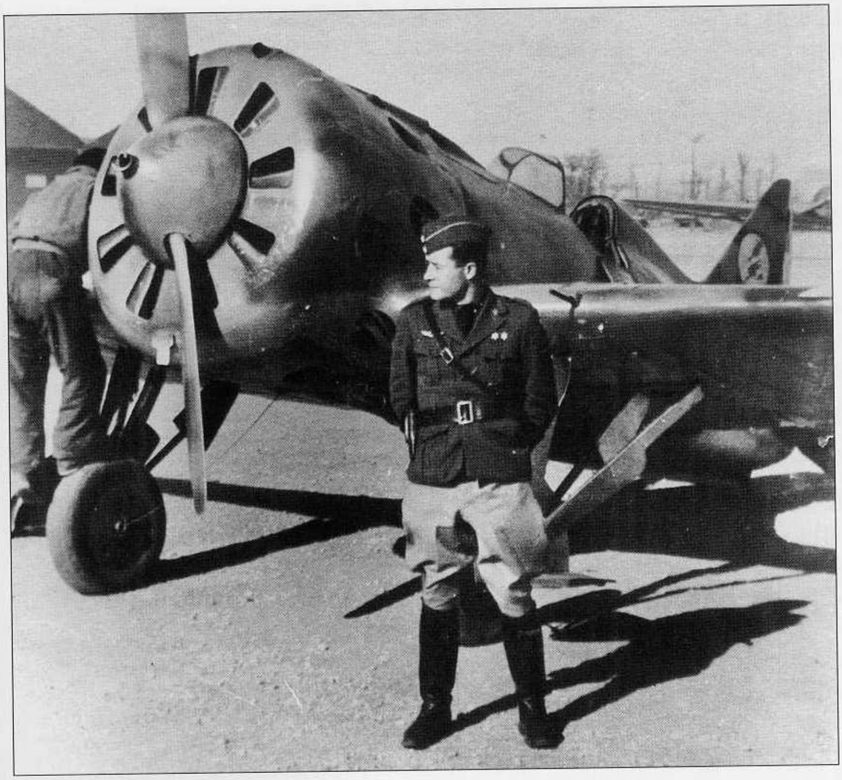
There is a false image of the Spanish Civil War that depicts a Spanish regular army fighting against a coalition of political militias supporting the Popular Front. In reality, the Spanish armed forces were divided, while both the Nationalists and the Republicans employed political militias on a huge scale. That is the reason why, from the beginning of the war, both sides had to rely on foreign aid in their attempts to gain a decisive advantage. This led to both sides using the arrival of any kind of help to the other as a justification for requesting further aid from their own sponsors. Another important factor was that Spain was an impoverished country, and in 1936 the weapons and tactics of her armed forces were obsolete compared to those of the rest of Western Europe. It was only the weapons provided from foreign arsenals that permitted the modernization of fighting capability in both the Nationalist and Republican camps.

German aid to the Nationalists: the first German volunteers head for Spain, aboard a cargo ship and dressed in civilian clothes. The only indication that this is a military expedition is the field kitchen in the background. (Campesino)

This book focuses on the help given by the German Third Reich to the Spanish Nationalists. However, in order to understand the reasons for the German presence in the conflict it is necessary to summarize, however briefly, the help given by other countries to both sides in the war.

Italy gave the Nationalists substantial military help of every kind. From 1931 the Spanish Left had been proclaiming its anti-Fascist policy, and from February 1936 the Popular Front defined itself as an 'anti-Fascist alliance'. It was logical for Mussolini to sympathize with those who opposed a government so belligerent towards his regime. Tens of thousands of men arrived in Spain from Italy in order to form complete divisions of the Nationalist Army, the so-called *Cuerpo de Tropas Voluntarias,* CTV (Corps of Volunteer Troops). Large quantities of military hardware were provided; a large part of the Italian Air Force served in Spain as the *Aviación Legionaria* (Legionary Air Force), and even the Italian Navy was deeply committed to the conflict. This enormous Italian aid to the Nationalists was decisive to their final victory.

The **Soviet Union** had not paid much attention to Spain before the beginning of the Civil War. Until 1933, Stalin and the Comintern (Communist International) had applied rigid criteria to left-wing parties around the world: while democratic parties were simply dismissed as 'bourgeois', any left-wing parties respectful of democracy were defined as 'social fascists'. After Hitler came to power in 1933, Stalin, fearing an alliance between capitalist and Fascist countries, radically changed his policy. In every country, Communists were now to try to ally themselves with Socialists and other democrats in 'anti-Fascist People's Fronts'. When civil war broke out in Spain, Stalin decided to support the Spanish Republican government without urging the Spanish Communists to launch a proletarian revolution, in order to try to persuade Western democracies that the USSR was a reliable partner.



Soviet aid to the Popular Front: a Condor Legion pilot officer poses with a captured Soviet Polikarpov I-16 fighter (called the 'Rata' by the Nationalists and 'Mosca' by the Republicans). The first appearance of this monoplane, and the more manoeuvrable I-15 biplane, over Madrid in October 1936 heralded a period of Republican air superiority. Now in Nationalist service, this I-16 bears on the tailfin the emblem of the Patrulla Azul (Blue Patrol), the first small Nationalist fighter unit, which was later used by other groups. The German Leutnant is smartly uniformed in khaki-brown cap and tunic and pale riding breeches, and sports the two rank stars of *teniente*. (Arráez)

Stalin's participation in the Civil War took several forms: he supplied the Republicans with vast amounts of military equipment, and sent high-ranking officers and weapons specialists to organize, train and even to command Republican military units, and themselves to handle directly the most sophisticated weapons. Finally, the USSR played a major role in the organization of the 'International Brigades'. Ostensibly, and in the eyes of many of the idealists who enlisted in their ranks, these had a purely anti-Fascist character; but in practice they had been organized by the Comintern, and were almost an element of Soviet military power in Spain.[2]

Before 1936, **Germany's** strategic plans took very little account of Spain. When the Civil War broke out the sympathies of German Nazis lay with those who called themselves anti-Communists, but 'old school' German diplomats advised against involvement. There were several reasons why this advice was disregarded. Firstly, in 1936 France, almost simultaneously with Spain, elected a Popular Front government, which immediately tried to establish a military alliance with the USSR in order to curtail German expansion. The Paris and Madrid governments had deep ideological ties; for German strategists the fear arose of military encirclement, with France and the USSR allied against the Reich, and Spain collaborating with France. The removal of the Madrid government would strategically weaken any eventual alliance between France and the Soviets.

Secondly, one of the objectives of Nazi foreign policy was to forge an alliance with Italy; Berlin calculated, rightly, that German support for the Spanish Nationalists would contribute to securing such an alliance.

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[2] See Elite 523, *The International Brigades in Spain*

Finally, after the restoration of compulsory military service in 1935, Germany had begun openly rebuilding its armed forces and developing new weapons, equipment and tactics; but their effectiveness was still untested, and the Spanish conflict would provide the perfect opportunity.

THE FIRST MONTHS OF GERMAN INTERVENTION

Had the military coup of 18 July 1936 been successful, it would have achieved a rapid seizure of power by the military rebels. In the event, the coup failed in all the major cities and industrial areas, and the government was able to maintain its control over most of the Navy and Air Force. The rebels achieved control only of some rural regions, which were ideologically conservative; but at least they had under their orders the most effective part of the Spanish Army – the 'African Army', the troops that garrisoned the Spanish Protectorate in Morocco. Although the initial coup had failed, if those forces could be committed quickly and effectively in mainland Spain, the war promised to be brief, and might consist essentially of nothing more than a march on Madrid.

Germany knew nothing of the military coup until it actually occurred. Naturally enough, German sympathies were with the rebels, not least because left-wing militias immediately attacked German businesses and institutions in Spain. As early as 23 July, Kriegsmarine ships set sail from Kiel bound for Spain, in order to protect and to evacuate approximately 15,000 German nationals.

From 18 July the rebels had started to transfer troops of the African Army to Spain, but their only means were a handful of elderly aircraft and a few fishing boats. On 22 July, Gen Francisco Franco, commander of the African Army and one of the most important leaders of the military uprising, requested – through the German military attaché in Paris – the despatch of German transport aircraft to aid this operation, but the German Foreign Office rejected the request when it reached Berlin. Franco had to look for other means of establishing contacts in Germany; getting in touch with German businessmen resident in Spanish Morocco who were also active Nazi Party members, he asked them to fly to Germany in a Lufthansa plane (which he had confiscated) in order to urge his appeal. Through their Party contacts these businessmen were able to meet Hitler on 26 July. The Führer had received news that both the French Popular Front government and the Soviet Union were sending weapons to the Spanish Republican government; after discussions with military advisers, he decided

The crew of a Junkers 52 trimotor stand alongside their aircraft, dressed in civilian clothes but with a certain military 'look' about them. Although the Germans attempted to avoid unwanted attention in this way, the presence of the first volunteers in Nationalist Spain was easily detected. (Guillén)

This legionary stands sentry duty, one of the rare occasions when the brown-painted German M1935 steel helmet was seen. (Campesino)

to send the requested aid. Since Franco needed aircraft, Hermann Göring, as commander of the Luftwaffe, was given the task of organizing the operation. A special staff – Sonderstab W, under the orders of Luftwaffe Gen Helmuth Wilberg – was immediately created in order to oversee the practical aspects of what was codenamed *Unternehmen Feurzauber* ('Operation Magic Fire'). Wilberg would remain at the head of Sonderstab W until April 1938, when he was replaced by another Luftwaffe officer, Gen Karl Friedrich Schweikhard.

Although the decision had been taken to send aid, this would have to be clandestine; Germany had only just started its rearmament and was still militarily weak, so any open support for Franco carried serious political risks. For this reason all deliveries of weapons and equipment to Spain, and payment through the import of Spanish products, would be carried out through two ostensibly private commercial companies – HISMA and ROWAK. The Kriegsmarine contributed some officers to Sonderstab W in order to create the so-called Schifffahrtabteilung (Shipping Detachment), responsible for controlling the sea traffic involved in the programme.

The reason why Franco needed German aircraft was that at the beginning of the conflict the Popular Front was able to maintain control over two-thirds of Spanish military aircraft, but only one-third of the pilots. Consequently the Nationalists found themselves with more pilots than planes. Germany decided to send 20 Junkers Ju 52 trimotors, which would fly to Morocco in the guise of Lufthansa planes, unarmed and with civilian pilots (in fact, like virtually all German commercial aircrews of that period, these were Luftwaffe reserve officers). These flights were scheduled to take place between 28 July and 10 August (one Junkers landed in Republican territory and was confiscated). At the same time orders were given to prepare the urgent transport by sea of the military equipment for the Ju 52s, six Heinkel He 51 biplane fighters and 20 light 20mm anti-aircraft guns, together with military air and ground personnel. These men were quickly recruited from among volunteers, without revealing details of their mission. Officially they would be discharged from the Luftwaffe and would travel to Spain as 'tourists'. They left Germany on 31 July and arrived in Cadiz on 6 August. Their commander was Maj Alexander von Scheele, a Luftwaffe officer who had lived in Argentina and spoke Spanish.

Between 20 July and 15 September 1936 more than 18,000 of the most combat-effective troops of the Spanish African Army – from the battalions of the Spanish Foreign Legion (*Legión Extranjera* or '*Tercio*'[3]), and the Moroccan native troops or '*Regulares*' – were transported from Morocco to Spain, both by sea and by means of an 'air bridge'. This began with only a few Spanish planes of very low capacity, and did not reach a serious tempo until the arrival of German aircraft. Although the Ju 52s arrived piecemeal, and half of them were handed over to the Spanish in order to be used as bombers, the Junkers were responsible for moving a large number of troops across the straits to Spain. Their pilots had to make up to four flights daily, sometimes with as many as 40 passengers (instead of the official maximum of 17) together with their personal weapons, as well as some heavy weapons and munitions. Together with Spanish and Italian planes that also took part, the Ju 52s

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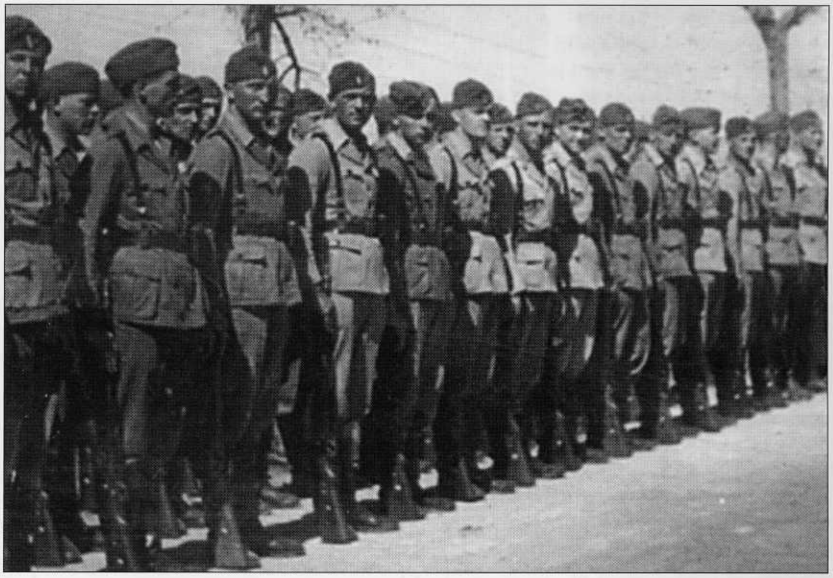
[3] See MAA 161, *The Spanish Foreign Legion*

It was hoped that the uniforms adopted by the CL would camouflage its members as personnel of the Spanish Foreign Legion, but in fact they had the opposite result; their smart and consistent turn-out made them easily distinguishable from any other units in the Nationalist Army. Note the use here of Y-straps with the belt, which was only seen on a few special ceremonial occasions. (Campesino)



played the leading role in one of the most decisive air operations of the war, which was also the first truly strategic troop airlift in history.

Only ten German military crews arrived for the Ju 52s, as a result of the decision to hand over half of the available machines to the Nationalists, these being used immediately for bombing missions. (Theoretically a transport plane, the Ju 52 had also been designed for use as a bomber, although it would soon prove inadequate in that role.) Oberleutnant Rudolf Freiherr von Moreau's pilots had been given strict orders to avoid combat missions, and initially limited themselves to transport flights. Nevertheless, Republican Navy warships patrolling the Straits of Gibraltar fired upon their flights between Africa and Spain. In response, on 13 August Freiherr von Moreau led two Ju 52 bombers with German crews in an attack on the cruiser *Jaime I*, inflicting heavy damage in the course of this first combat mission by German aircrews in Spain. Shortly thereafter Ju 52s began to fly increasing numbers of such missions, supporting Nationalist forces marching on Madrid. At the same time German gunners started to instruct the Spanish artillerymen on the 20mm Flak cannon. The German He 51 fighter pilots should also have limited themselves to instructing Spanish aircrew but, eager to join the fight, they reported (untruthfully) to Berlin that the Spanish pilots were unable to fly the Heinkels, and received permission to fly in combat themselves. On 25 August the German fighters recorded their first aerial victory.

During August, Gen Wilberg visited Spain, and after studying the situation on the ground he recommended increasing German military aid. On 5 September a promising officer from the German Army arrived in Spain: Oberstleutnant (LtCol) Walter Warlimont – who during World War II would be recognized as a brilliant strategist – replaced von Scheele at the head of the German military presence in Spain. By then it was well known that the Popular Front had started to receive Soviet weapons, and Warlimont informed Berlin that it was necessary to send not only more aircraft and AA guns but also tanks and anti-tank guns. His report was accepted, and immediately recruitment of volunteers began among the recently formed Panzertruppen in order to create two companies

The appearance of the first Messerschmitt Bf 109Bs with 2./J88 over the Biscay front in early spring 1937 began to redress the balance of the unit's encounters with Soviet fighters; the first victory for the Bf 109 was an I-15 claimed by Oblt Günther Lützow on 14 April. This machine, its upper surfaces finished in grey-green *RLM-grau*, seems to have suffered from the besetting weakness of the type: a narrow, flimsy undercarriage, coupled with a persistent crabbing to the left on take-off and landing. It is being examined by a group of CL personnel and a civilian engineer from the BFW factory at Augsburg – note the man in plus-fours standing on the wing. A large number of civilians from the aeronautical companies accompanied the military personnel to Spain. (Arráez)

equipped with PzKw I light tanks, plus the necessary logistical and support units, and an anti-tank detachment with 3.7cm AT guns. In this way the Heer (German Army) became involved in the Spanish Civil War alongside the Luftwaffe. Another promising German officer, ObstLt Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma – who would later command the Afrika Korps – was appointed to head this small Panzergruppe, codenamed 'Drohne'.

The Panzer troops arrived in Spain on 7 October 1936, and immediately began their task of instructing Spanish personnel in handling tanks and AT guns. Before the war the Spanish could only field a handful of obsolete Renault FT-17s, and the Italians had only provided Fiat-Ansaldo CV-33 tankettes. Despite their mediocre performance, the PzKw Is were therefore the best armoured vehicles the Nationalists had.

That same month Obst Hans von Funck also arrived in Spain, to relieve Warlimont. When, a short time later, the Condor Legion was created, von Funck stayed in Spain as commander of the Army elements and represented them at Franco's HQ; the codename for all German Army elements in Spain was 'Imker'. Despite this, however, the Luftwaffe remained the most important branch of the German forces in Spain. At the end of summer 1936 a new shipment of planes had increased the number of Ju 52s available; the He 51s had increased to 14 planes; He 45 reconnaissance aircraft had arrived, as had seaplanes for maritime recce patrols. Significantly, Heinkel He 50s and Henschel Hs 123s had also been sent in order to be tested as dive-bombers.

At the beginning of October 1936 the Nationalists were ready to start their assault on Madrid, and had concentrated their best troops in the area surrounding the city. However, the Republicans had not remained inactive. As the various party militias proved unable to stop the Nationalists, the first units of a new Popular Army had been raised. This was usually referred to as the 'Red Army'; significantly, it adopted the red star as its badge, and a Soviet-style system of dual command was established, with political commissars appointed alongside unit commanders. More importantly, Soviet I-15 and I-16 fighter planes, SB-2 bombers, and BT-5 and T-26 tanks were shipped from the USSR in quantity, and the volunteer International Brigades raised by the Comintern had begun arriving in Madrid. This Soviet equipment was more up-to-date than that so far supplied to the Nationalists by Germany and Italy. As a result, the assault on Madrid was stopped. The war seemed to stagnate, and it was feared that the balance would tip in favour of the Popular Front, due to the greater economic and human resources available to the government.

To prevent this happening, Germany offered to send a much more powerful combat unit to try to compensate for the Nationalists' weakness. Franco gave his approval, and on 30 October 1936 the order was given for the creation of what became the Condor Legion (in German, Legion Condor; hereafter in this text, CL). Although some German politicians even went as far as proposing the sending of complete German infantry divisions to be deployed in Spain, this never happened. The CL was to maintain the same characteristics as the contingent already sent to Spain: essentially, it was to be an Air Force unit.

BIRTH OF THE CONDOR LEGION

By the end of October 1936 the Germans had sent 87 aircraft to Spain, some of these having been handed over to the Nationalists. From that date, German involvement in the war increased both in quantity and in quality.

On 7 November, Germany began transporting additional men, weapons and other military equipment by sea. The agreements reached between Spain and Germany established that:

1. All German military formations in Spain were to be under the command of German officers, although they would always obey orders from the Spanish military authorities.
2. On paper, German soldiers who volunteered to serve in Spain were discharged from the German armed forces, and became members of the Spanish Nationalist forces. It was decided that while they were on duty in Spain they would immediately be promoted one rank above that which they had held previously.

The Spanish armed forces (like those of France) included a military corps in which the enlistment of foreigners was permitted, the *Legión* or '*Tercio*' (although this differed from the French Foreign Legion in having only a minority of foreigners). For this reason, the German and Italian combatants in the Nationalist Army were called *legionarios*, in an attempt to imply that they were foreign volunteers in the Spanish Foreign Legion. The Italian air contingent was called the *Aviación Legionaria*; when the first Italian pilots arrived, before it was clear that Italy was going to be deeply committed to the war, they decided to stay and fight in Spain and actually enlisted in the Spanish Foreign Legion.

Regarding the name by which the German volunteers were to become known, the story is rather more complex. Franco had decided to give the uprising against the Popular Front a deeply patriotic character, and he tried to conceal Italian and German help. Therefore, it was ordered that the codename of *negrillos*

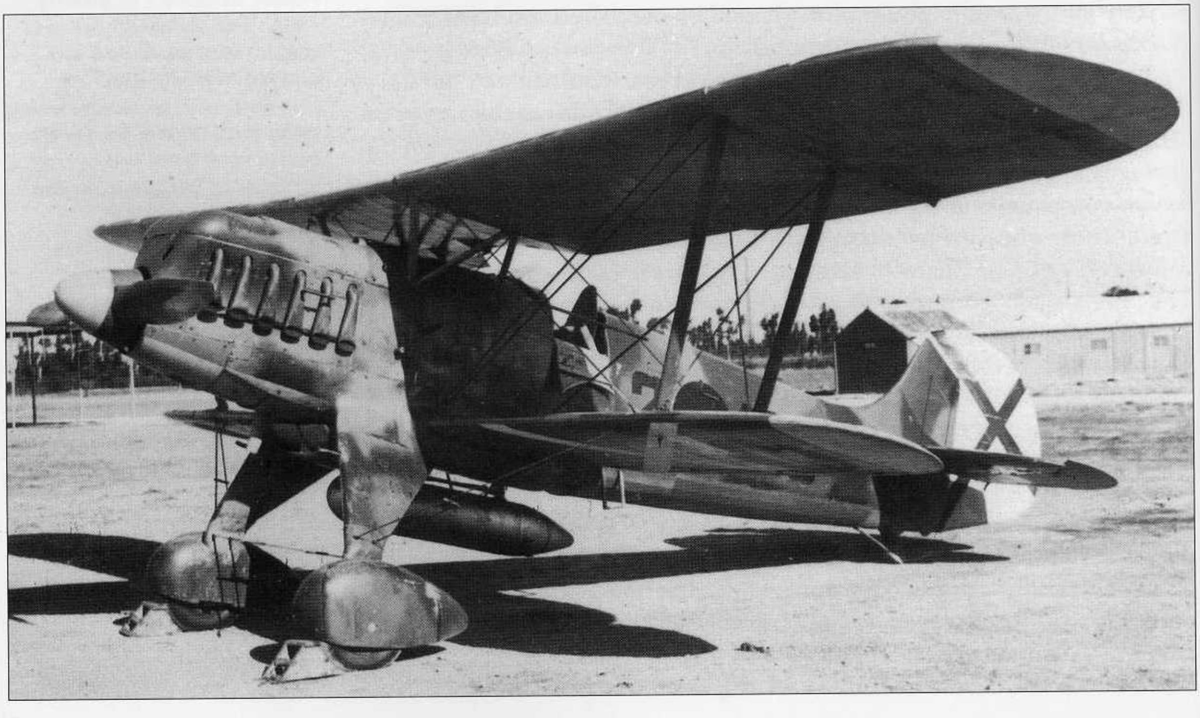
Recently arrived in Spain, members of Panzergruppe Drohne begin machine gun instruction for Spanish personnel selected to provide the crews for the Panzer I tanks. The first Nationalist tank battalion was formed with men from Regimiento de Infanteria 'Argel' No.37, commanded by Maj José Pujales Carrasco – an infantry officer with some experience of working with tanks, who was recalled from retirement. The only element of uniformity among these three Germans is the black Spanish beret; the rest of their clothing is a mixture of civilian garments. (Campesino)

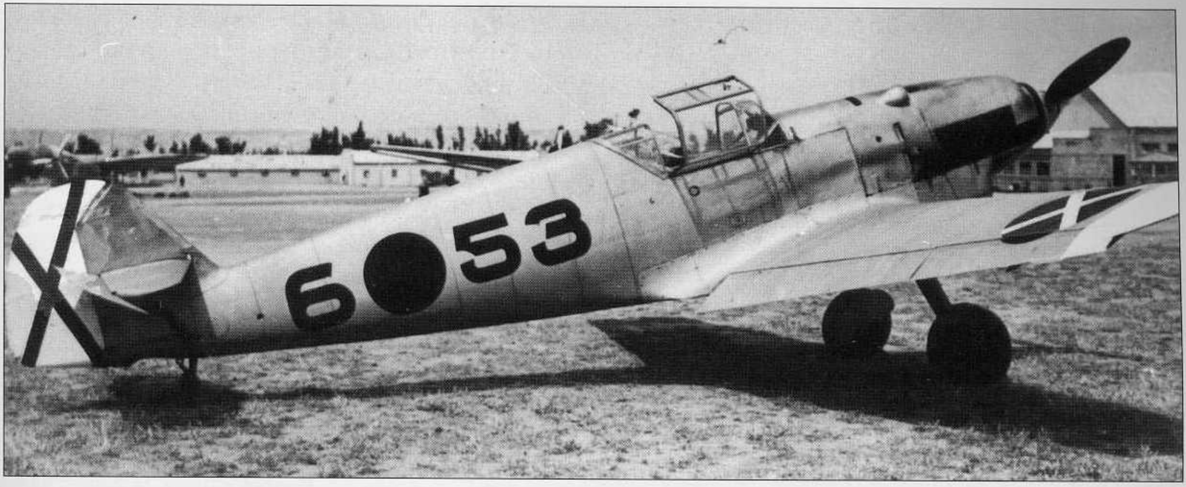
('little blacks') was to be used to refer to the Germans, and in Spanish Nationalist documents the word *alemanes* (Germans) was for a long time avoided, all references being to *negrillos* officers, *negrillos* tanks, *negrillos* instructors, etc. This term was obviously quite unsuitable to be transformed into an official name. The German air contingent had unofficially adopted the name Legion Condor, following the Italian idea of ostensibly being part of the Spanish Foreign Legion, and adding the name of the majestic bird of the Andes mountains – unknown in Spain, but common in Spanish-speaking South America, where the local airline created by Lufthansa was called *Sindicato Condor*. It seems that the Germans always associated aviation in the Spanish-speaking world with the word 'condor'; coupled to 'Legion' this gave the German expeditionary force a short and sonorous name, which proved so popular that it ended up becoming definitive.

In reality, neither the Germans of the CL nor their Italian counterparts were part of the Spanish Foreign Legion, nor were the air contingents formally integrated into the Nationalist Air Force. The air power under Nationalist orders was in fact the sum of three different air forces: Spanish, Italian and German. Nevertheless, both Germans and Italians painted their planes with Nationalist Air Force insignia.

The Luftwaffe furnished the bulk of the CL effectives, creating a very original operational unit. Several authors refer to it as 'Geschwader 88', and others as 'Fliegerkorps 88', but in fact neither title was used due to the rapid popularity of the name Legion Condor. Effectives of the Luftwaffe in Spain were always greater in number than the theoretical strength of a Geschwader, and less than that of a Fliegerkorps. In fact none of the usual Luftwaffe unit designations correspond to the composition of the CL, since the latter combined not only the different air elements (fighters, bombers, reconnaissance planes, etc.) but also

The first six Heinkel He 51 fighters were being flown in action by Spanish pilots by mid August 1936; the war's leading ace, Capt Joaquín García Morato, scored the first Heinkel victory on 18 August when he shot down a Republican Potez 540 bomber over Granada. The He 51s and Ju 52s were initially painted in a camouflage pattern of light grey, brown and green; Condor Legion aircraft were also supplied in *RLM-grau*, or more usually in a plain light grey finish, but all these schemes were seen throughout the war. They used the same markings as the Spanish Nationalist Air Force: a stylized black St Andrew's cross on a white background on the rudder; the same in white, to full chord or confined on a black disc, on the wing surfaces; and a plain black disc on the fuselage. White wingtips were also common. (Hans Obert)





Messerschmitt Bf 109B-2 of 2./J88 on the Brunete front, June 1937. Most Bf 109s were finished plain pale grey, with the universal pale blue undersides. Black fuselage numbers identified each aircraft, separated by the black disc. The numbers left of the disc identified the type of aircraft (e.g. '2' = He 51, '6' = Bf 109, '22' = Ju 52, '25' = He 111, '27' = Do 17, '29'= Ju 87, etc). Those to the right of it identified the individual machine, in the order in which it had entered service – here, the 53rd Bf 109 to arrive in Spain. These numbers therefore gave no immediate Staffel identification. (Hans Obert)

included AA artillery (Flak-Artillerie), signals troops, and medical and service units. In its structure the CL was a small Luftflotte, so this expeditionary unit was always commanded by officers of general rank, although on average it only had between 100 and 150 operational aircraft at any one time.

For many years difficulties have hampered those trying to write the history of the CL because the main official archives relating to the unit were destroyed by Allied bombing during World War II. Its history therefore has to be assembled by relying upon incomplete documentation and personal testimonies, and this always leaves a margin for doubt. One example of this is the simple fact that the exact number of Germans who belonged to the CL is unknown. For political reasons left-wing commentators have claimed that the total was as many as 50,000 men, while in fact the CL never had more than 6,500 personnel serving in Spain at any one time. (One interesting fact that is often forgotten is that several hundred German civilians were serving with the CL in Spain, especially as technicians from the aeronautical companies and as translators.) Given the regular rotation of effectives, the total number of Germans who served in the CL was probably just over 15,000. In general, Luftwaffe personnel served in Spain on tours of between six and nine months, while Army troops remained for longer periods. The total number of German personnel in Spain was always very low when compared with the Italians. For example, in August 1938 the CL only comprised 5,600 men, and by the time the war finished in April 1939 this number had decreased to 4,800 servicemen.

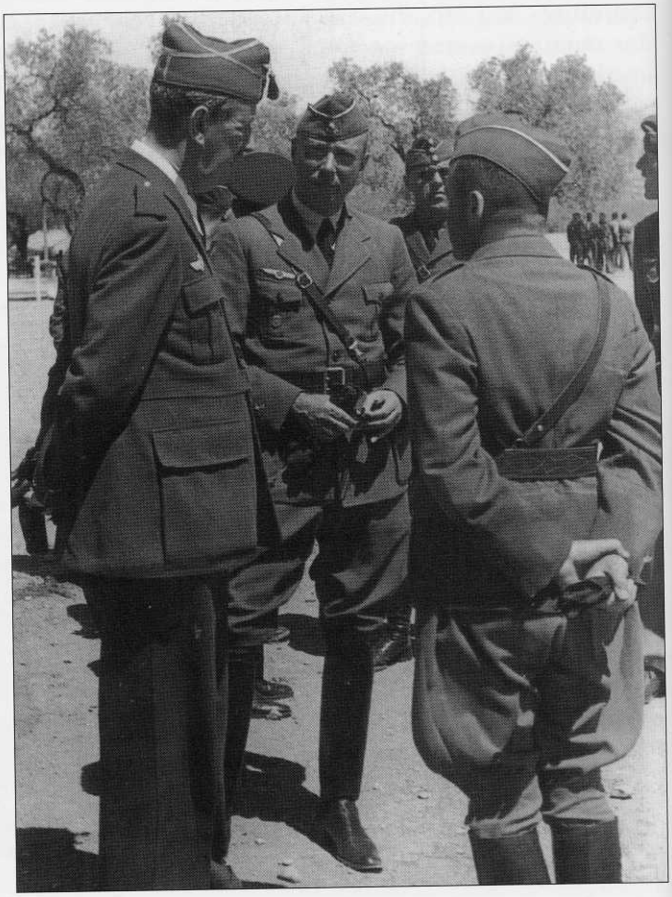
The small number of its effectives should not imply any undervaluation of the CL's efficiency. It could field aircraft of all main operational types, and also a powerful anti-aircraft artillery component, supported by every necessary technical and logistical unit, making it completely self-contained. Its headquarters travelled quickly towards the deployment zones on trains specially adapted for this function. It owed its high mobility to its being completely motorized – something otherwise unknown among the armies confronting one another in the Spanish Civil War. It was operational throughout the war, and was in some way involved in all the main campaigns that were fought, never being rested in secondary or quiet sectors.

Structure of the Condor Legion

Although the German expeditionary force ended up being known as the Condor Legion, the different command, air, artillery and support units forming the CL still used the designation number '88' initially allocated to them by the Luftwaffe. These units were as follows:

Command:
Führungsstab 88 (S88). The operations staff.
Verbindungsstab 88 (VS88). The liaison staff with the Spanish Nationalist and Italian expeditionary air forces.
Air combat units:
Jagdgruppe 88 (J88). Fighter group, organized in three, and for a time four squadrons (Staffeln), each theoretically having 12 aircraft. For a short time there was a *Versuchsjagdstaffel 88* (VJ88) – fighter test squadron – assigned to J88.
Kampfgruppe 88 (K88). Bomber group, also with three squadrons each with 12 aircraft. In addition, an experimental *Versuchsbomberstaffel 88* was briefly attached to the unit, later giving rise to the temporary existence of a fourth squadron. A small unit of dive-bombers, called *Stuka 88*, also formed part of K88.
Aufklärungsgruppe 88 (A88). The air reconnaissance unit, whose composition varied between a full Gruppe and a single Staffel.
Aufklärungs und Bombenstaffel (See) 88 (AS88). A squadron employed on maritime reconnaissance and bombing missions.
Ground combat units:
Flak Abteilung (motorisierte) 88 (F88). A very powerful motorized anti-aircraft battalion.
Other ground units:
Luftnachriten Abteilung (mot) 88 (Ln88). Motorized air force signals unit.
Sanitäts Abteilung 88 (San88). The medical detachment. The CL also had two military hospitals grouped into a unit designated *Lazarett 88* (Laz88).
Luftzeuggruppe und Luftpark 88 (Park 88 or P88). The unit charged with the technical maintenance of planes, recovering damaged aircraft, fuel supplies, motorized vehicle maintenance, signal equipment, etc.
Munitions Anstalt 88 (MA88). Munitions depot and ordnance service for the CL.
Wetterstelle 88 (W88). The CL's integral meteorological unit.

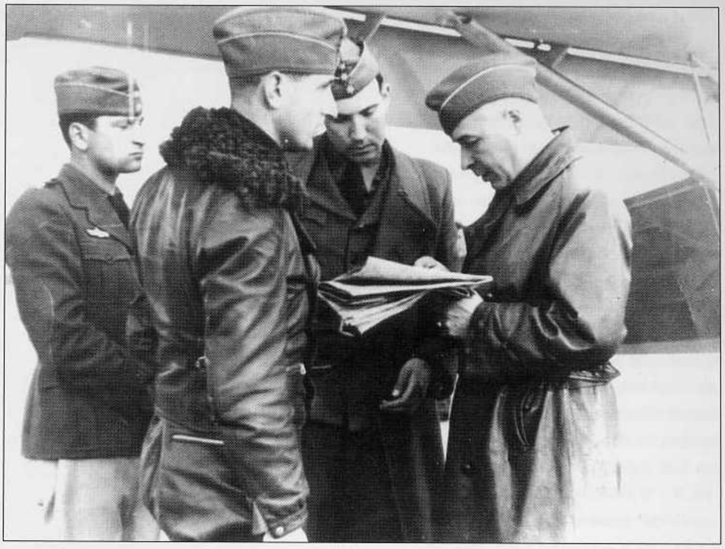
The German Army component of the CL, codenamed 'Imker', initially consisted of Panzergruppe Drohne, with both tanks and anti-tank weapons. It was sometimes called Panzergruppe 88, or Imker-Drohne. With the creation of the CL a signals



Generalmajor Hellmuth Volkmann (centre), commanding officer of the Condor Legion in 1937–38, in conversation with the Spanish Gen Kindelán (left) and other German officers. Volkmann (see Plate F2) displays the rank of *general de brigada* on his tunic cuff in Spanish fashion; Spanish pilot's wings of the pre-1938 pattern above his right pocket; and below this the badge of the Navarre Army Corps. His overall appearance remains unmistakably German. (Guillén)

intelligence company, codenamed Imker-Horch, was sent to Spain. Later these components were followed by a significant number of military instructors collectively known as Imker-Ausbilder.

The small German naval component deployed with the CL was codenamed Gruppe Nordsee. When Germany officially recognized the Nationalist government in Spain (16 November 1936) a certain number of officers were appointed to support the German air attaché (Büro Grau), and others the naval attaché (Büro Anker). These staffs were also considered part of the Condor Legion.



This group of officers from S88 wear different uniform combinations: service dress with very pale breeches, a short leather flying jacket with a deep fleece collar, the Condor Legion greatcoat, and a leather coat. (Arráez)

Commanders

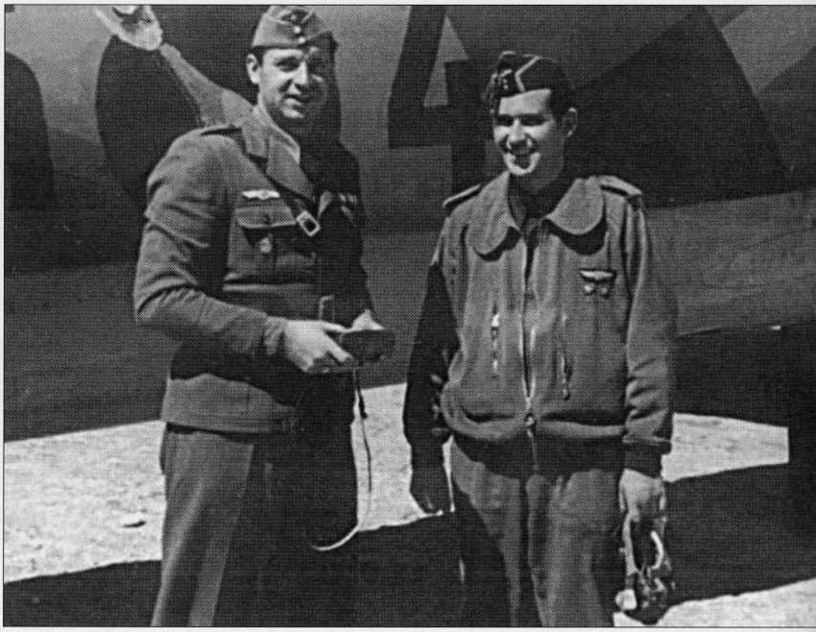
Since the Condor Legion was essentially an Air Force unit its commanders-in-chief were always Luftwaffe generals. The first was GenMaj Hugo Sperrle, who commanded from November 1936 until October 1937. His chiefs-of-staff were Alexander Holle (until January 1937) and later Wolfram von Richthofen (until October 1937). Sperrle was relieved by GenMaj Helmuth Volkmann, who commanded the CL until October 1938, with Hermann Plocher as his chief-of-staff. The last commander was the aforementioned Wolfram von Richthofen, who led the CL until the end of the Civil War, with Hans Seidemann as chief-of-staff. Sperrle would be promoted to field marshal in 1940 for his successful command of Luftflotte 3 in the French campaign, and remained in that country thereafter, though his forces were bled dry for other fronts. Baron von Richthofen, promoted field marshal in 1943, was a ground-attack specialist; he held senior commands on all fronts, and was certainly the most able Luftwaffe general after Kesselring.

UNIFORMS

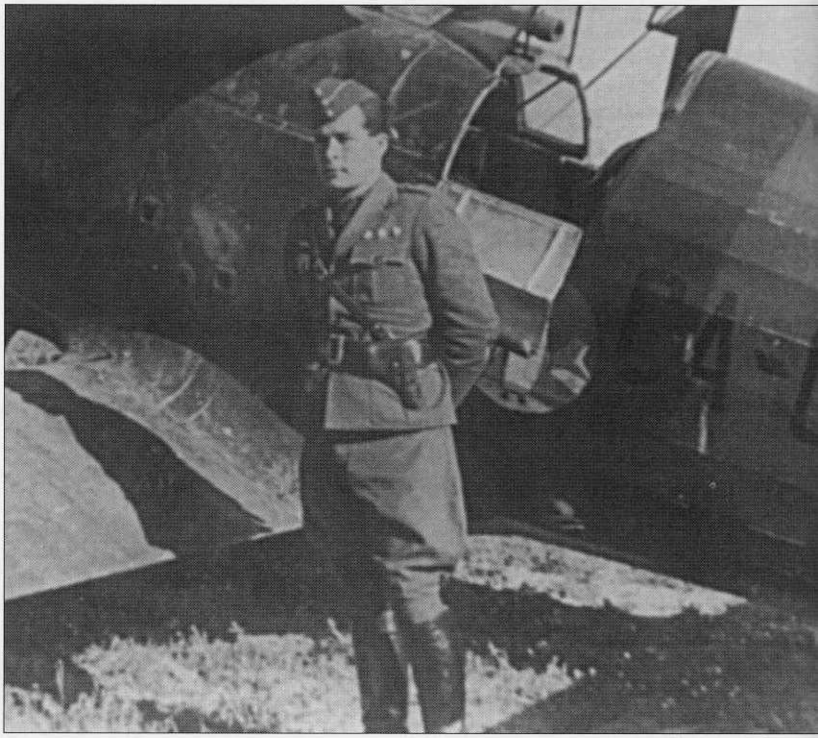
Before the Condor Legion was established, German volunteers in Spain used civilian clothing. The aircrews usually wore Lufthansa summer dress, and the tank crews used overalls. Following the creation of the CL in October 1936 the uniforms and rank badges of German volunteers were standardized. No document has been found showing dress and badge regulations, but it is obvious that some kind of rules must have existed, since photographs show standardized items.

It is difficult to say that there was 'uniformity' in the Nationalist Army at the time of the CL's formation. The troops that had arrived from Africa – the *Legión* and the *Regulares* – used their own more or less exotic uniforms. The party militias that supported the uprising also had their own uniforms; but there were widespread shortages and disparity in dress, since all the textile manufacturers were located in the regions

Teniente Calpasoro (right) was one of the Spanish pilots who served in K88; here he wears the Nationalist Air Force dark blue cap with bright green piping and tassel, displaying his gold rank stars below a winged badge; his rank is repeated below his pilot's wings, worn on the left breast – the Italian position – of his Italian flying jacket. His German instructor wears the three silver stars of a Condor Legion Oberleutnant ranking in Spain as captain, with wings in the conventional position, and the badge of the Navarre Army Corps on the right pocket. The He 111, '25.4', is finished in three-colour 'splinter' camouflage and has a badge of a popping champagne bottle on the fuselage disc – a popular position for unit emblems. (Calpasoro)



The typical appearance of a Condor Legion Oberleutnant pilot in service dress with breeches and riding boots; note the small holstered pistol, probably a Walther PPK, on his 'Sam Browne'-style belt. He stands in front of a recently captured Soviet Polikarpov I-15 fighter, called 'Chato' by the Republicans but misidentified by the Nationalists as an American type – they called it the 'Curtiss'. A broad red recognition band and the badge of one of the Republican _Escuadrillas de Chatos_ can be seen on the fuselage. (Campesino)



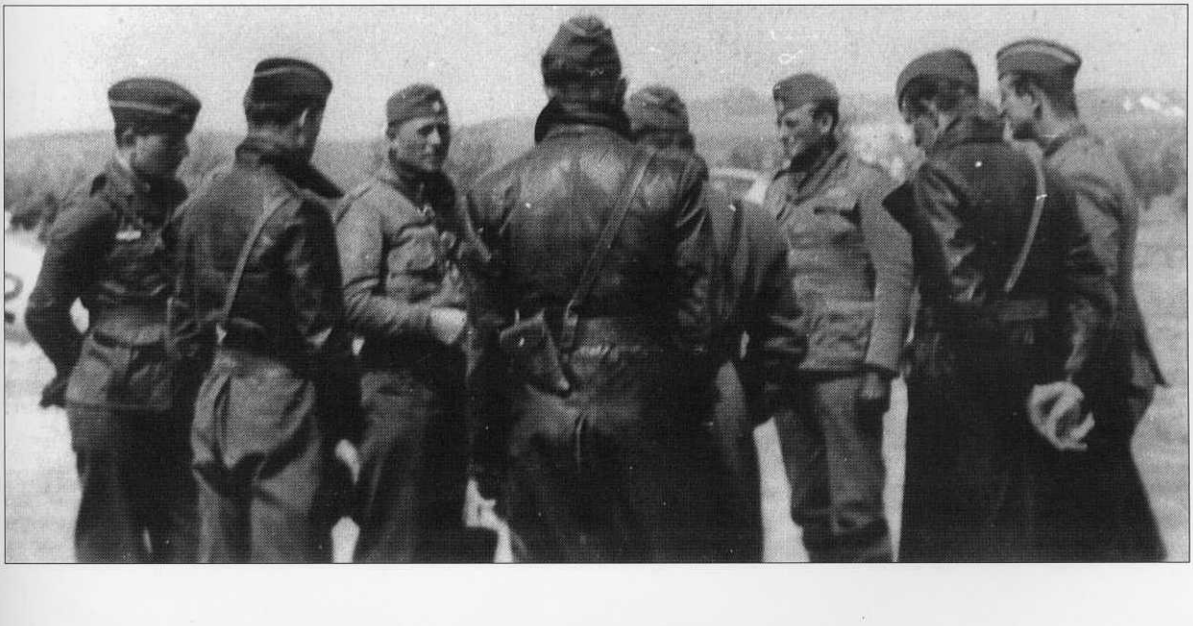
under Popular Front control. Consequently, in 1936 many Nationalis soldiers in fact used civilian garments. Nevertheless, CL members wer issued a uniform, and this was so standardized that it was clearly o German origin – no other unit on the Nationalist side achieved such degree of uniformity in dress. It is reasonable to deduce that C uniforms were manufactured, at least initially, in Germany, althoug later CL personnel also received garments made in Spain.

The uniform adopted was designed to allow the Germans to pass unnoticed, and the colour chosen was the traditional olive- or khaki-brown of Spanish Army uniforms. The basic outfit was a field cap of Luftwaffe cut, a four-pocket service tunic, straight trousers, a khaki shirt and, in winter, a matching overcoat. In its cut the tunic looked more like the German Luftwaffe *Feldbluse* than its Spanish equivalent, the so-called *guerrera*; it had an open notched collar for use over a shirt collar and necktie, and four patch pockets. It could be completed either with or without shoulder straps, apparently depending upon either personal taste or production by different manufacturers. The shirt was basically the same colour, but because it was of lighter material and was washed more often it quickly faded to a lighter khaki shade. According to circumstances and the temperature, the shirt was worn with or without a black tie; it was often seen spread open over the tunic collar, in the Spanish manner. The use of the shirt without the tunic was also very common in the scorching Spanish summers. Later on, and especially among the staff of the Imker-Ausbilder group, a white shirt with black tie was widely used on formal occasions such as parades.

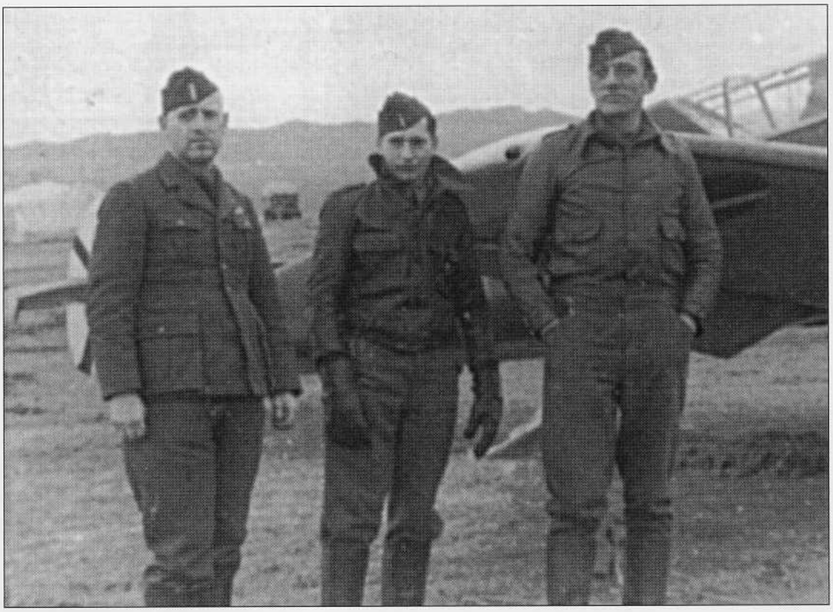
Trousers, also khaki-brown, were combined with different kinds of footwear. Officers favoured privately purchased riding breeches, often of a paler shade, with black leather riding boots, but also used the standard issue straight slacks with marching boots, flying boots, or laced black shoes, depending on circumstances. The legionaries and NCOs normally wore the issue trousers tucked into black leather marching boots while on duty, and unbloused trousers over black shoes when off duty. Other variations were possible, like the use of puttees.

The Panzergruppe Drohne initially received a slightly different uniform (see Plate C), but at the end of 1936 they adopted the same uniform as the rest of the Condor Legion. The handful of German sailors serving ashore with the CL wore khaki-brown or civilian clothes.

In fact, photographs show that CL personnel were very liberal in their choice of clothing. In many of them we can see the use of a wide variety of non-regulation shorter jackets, with only two pockets, and



A group of Bf 109 pilots seen in a variety of the most commonly worn garments: short blouson-style jackets of both leather and cloth, leather overcoats, and standard service tunics. Note how many wear the cross strap of their belts even with flying clothing. (Arráez)



Three ground crew from J88 show that it was not only pilots who enjoyed considerable discretion as far as uniforms were concerned. Besides the service tunic, privately acquired short jackets were often worn. (Arráez)

made from either cloth or leather. In some cases these resembled the Luftwaffe *Fliegerbluse*, or even the British Army's battledress.

A khaki-brown greatcoat was issued, but many officers preferred to use various German leather overcoats. Enlisted men and NCOs wore a dark brown leather belt with a plain box buckle. Leather Y-straps and rifle ammunition pouches were rarely used. Officers wore a light brown leather field belt with double-claw buckle and a supporting cross strap across the right shoulder.

The khaki-brown *Fliegermütze* cap had silver piping around the upper edge of the turn-up flap to denote officers (gold piping in the case of generals), in accordance with German practice. However, following Spanish tradition, these field caps were also used to display rank badges (see opposite). The members of Panzergruppe Drohne were distinguishable from the other Germans in Spain by their use of a black Spanish beret. At the beginning this did not bear any insignia, but later a silver skull-and-crossbones and sometimes a silver swastika were pinned to the front. Rank badges were occasionally displayed on the black berets by officers. German steel helmets – painted brown, but without decal insignia – were issued, but scarcely used.

The aircrews used the regulation Luftwaffe flying suits, although the use of privately purchased leather jackets was also very popular. For work, the ground crews of the flying units as well as members of Panzergruppe Drohne wore simple overalls. Finally, it must be borne in mind that because of the high summer temperatures, the garb of legionaries was often reduced to nothing more than a pair of shorts.

When the Condor Legion returned home to Germany and were honoured by a victory parade in Berlin, a great number of the original combatants from early tours no longer had CL uniforms, and it was therefore necessary to find a large number of uniforms of a similar colour. A solution was found by converting uniforms of the Reichs Arbeitsdienst (National Labour Service), as their olive-brown colour was the closest available to that of the Condor Legion.

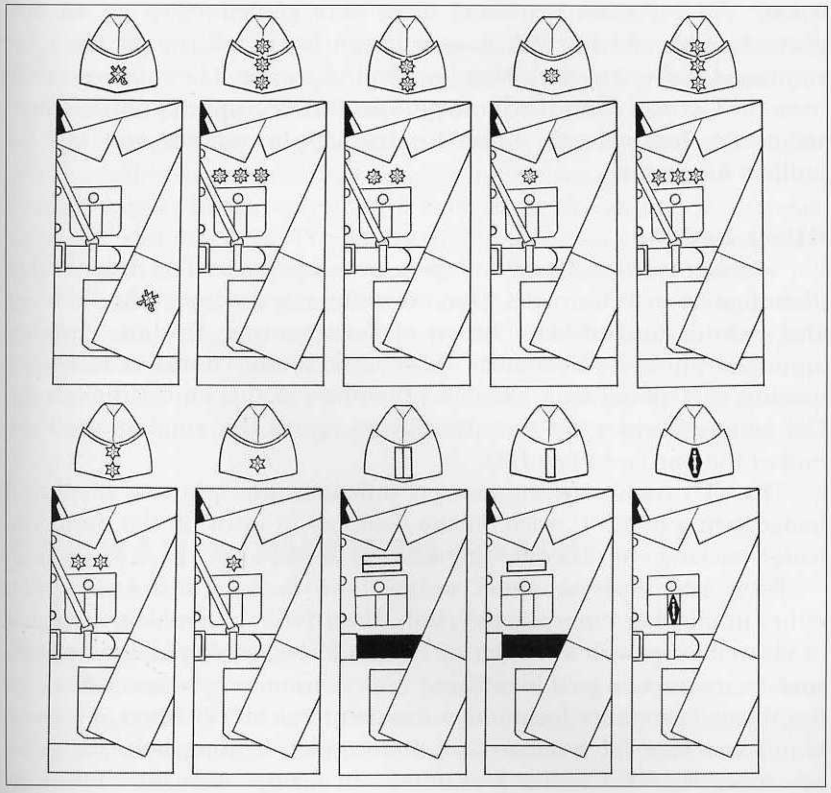
Rank badges

Traditionally, Spanish rank badges were worn both on the headgear and on the tunic cuff. Members of the Condor Legion displayed theirs vertically on the field cap but also horizontally on the left breast rather than on the sleeves. This requires some explanation. Due to the shortage of officers and NCOs in the Nationalist Army, many officers were temporarily promoted, and received the corresponding rank badges. These temporary rank badges were worn on the left breast of the tunic and/or the greatcoat, on a black cloth patch usually called a *galleta* ('biscuit'). For example, a captain given command of a battalion wore the rank badge of a substantive captain on his cuff (three six-pointed stars), but on his left breast a *galleta* displaying the single eight-pointed star of a major. As the Nationalist authorities immediately promoted all German volunteers by one rank, the wearing of rank badges on the left breast became the general rule for the Condor Legion.

Every rank-and-file member of the CL was called in German a Legionär (Spanish, *legionario*). Their rank insignia was a single gold-coloured bar, similar to that worn by a *cabo primero* (first corporal) of the Spanish Army – the senior rank for Spanish rank-and-file, equivalent to the German Obergefreiter.

A Condor Legion junior NCO – Unteroffizier – was called a *suboficial*; the rank insignia was two gold-coloured bars. In this case there was no exact corresponding rank in the Spanish Army, although the insignia was similar to that of a *brigada* (one of the senior NCO ranks). The LC's senior NCOs – Feldwebeln – were given the status of commissioned officers, at the lowest rank of *alférez*, equivalent to the German Leutnant.

An Oberleutnant of Panzergruppe Drohne wearing the black beret, with the death's-head badge that became the most recognized item of the Panzergruppe's uniform. Here the stars of his Spanish rank of captain are pinned in a row beneath it, which was not so common. (Campesino)



Condor Legion rank insignia (German/*Spanish* ranks):

(1) Generalmajor/ *General de brigada*

(2) Oberst & Oberstleutnant/ *Coronel*

(3) Major/ *Teniente-coronel*

(4) Hauptmann/ *Comandante*

(5) Oberleutnant/ *Capitán*

(6) Leutnant/ *Teniente*

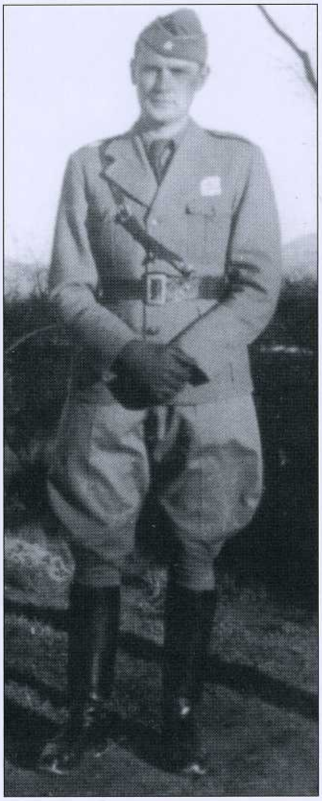
(7) Unteroffiziere mit Portepee/ *Alferéz*

(8) Unteroffiziere ohne Portepee/ *Brigada*

(9) Legionär/ *Cabo primero*

(10) Interpreter

(Drawing by Ramiro Bujeiro)



Despite the very smart officer's uniform this is a German Feldwebel, serving as an instructor at one of the Spanish military academies under the Imker-Ausbilder programme. All senior German NCOs were up-graded to the Spanish rank of *alférez* (second lieutenant); the silver star of that rank is displayed on his cap, and on a patch of his white infantry Waffenfarbe on the right breast. (Campesino)

All CL officers held the rank one step above their German rank; this system has caused much confusion, as the same person has been referred to on some occasions by his German rank and on others by the Spanish rank displayed on his uniform. (In this text we use German ranks unless otherwise indicated.) A German Leutnant (second lieutenant) wore the insignia of a Spanish *teniente* (first lieutenant); an Oberleutnant (first lieutenant) that of a *capitán* (captain); a Hauptmann (captain) that of a *comandante* (major); a Major that of a *teniente-coronel* (lieutenant-colonel); and an Obersleutnant (lieutenant-colonel) that of a *coronel* (colonel). However, a German Oberst (colonel) serving in the CL was not up-graded, and also wore the insignia of *coronel.* The commander of the Condor Legion wore the insignia of a Spanish *general de brigada* (major-general): a gold four-point star superimposed on a crossed baton and sword.

There was some difference in the details of the junior officers' rank insignia. In the Spanish tradition the stars used to denote officer ranks (one, two and three six-pointed for *alférez, teniente* and *capitán*; one, two and three eight-pointed for *comandante, teniente-coronel* and *coronel*) are always gold. In the Condor Legion the six-pointed stars were silver, and the field officers' eight-pointed stars gold.

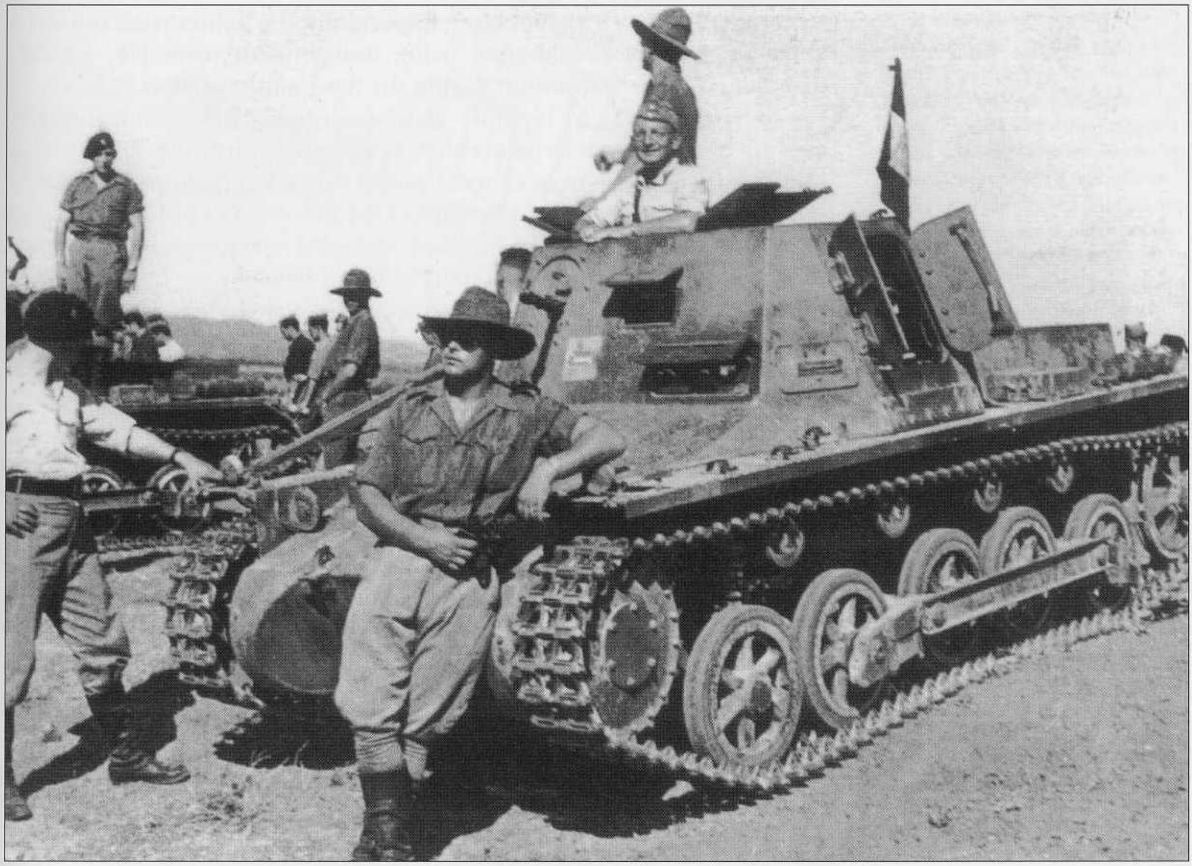
Another peculiarity of the CL was the use of Waffenfarbe – the wearer's German branch-of-service colour – as a cloth backing to the rank badges. Sometimes, especially among the legionaries and NCOs, the rank badge was sewn onto the forage cap and service tunic without such coloured backing. In other cases, especially among officers, the cap insignia showed a narrow outline of Waffenfarbe, and that on the tunic was worn on a square or rectangular cloth background in the appropriate colour. For Luftwaffe personnel these were golden-yellow for air and ground crews; red for Flak troops; brown for signal troops; black for command staffs; and dark blue for medical troops. The units recruited from the German Army used rose-pink for Panzergruppe Drohne; lemon-yellow for Imker-Horch; white for infantry instructors, and red for artillery instructors.

Other badges

For obvious reasons, Condor Legion personnel used few insignia that identified them as Germans. One exception was the use of the *Totenkopf* and swastika on the black berets of Panzergruppe Drohne. Another appeared when, in November 1936, ObstLt von Thoma ordered the making of a special tank badge for members of this unit, although the German authorities did not officially recognize this emblem until the end of the war (see Plate H4).

The CL's numerous interpreters only had the right to a small oval badge with a letter 'i' worn on the field cap; if worn on the tunic, the badge backing was diamond-shaped.

Pilots wore Spanish pilots' wings above their right breast pocket, either in metal or embroidered cloth. Until 1938 this emblem consisted of silvered wings with a red central disc; superimposed over the disc were specific insignia in gold identifying the different aircrew specialities – a four-bladed propeller for pilots, a five-point star for observers, a crossed bomb and rifle for bombardiers, and crossed lighting bolts for radio operators. However, in that year important changes were introduced: an



The broad-brimmed hat, popularly known as the *chambergo* by the Spanish in Morocco, was very appropriate for the torrid Spanish summers; it was worn without insignia. Here German instructors of Panzergruppe Drohne train Spanish personnel in the use of the Kleiner Befehlswagen command version of the PzKw IB. The Ausf A and Ausf B models of the Panzer I can be distinguished by the number of road wheels – four on the original model, and five on this up-engined version. (Molina)

imperial crown was placed at top centre, and on the red disc, behind the aircrew symbols, a black eagle of St John, which had been adopted into the new coat of arms of Nationalist Spain.

The Germans also used the Italian *Aviación Legionaria* pilot's insignia, which combined the pre-1938 Spanish pilot's wings with the Spanish Foreign Legion badge – an upright halberd superimposed on a crossed arquebus and crossbow. The Italian *Regia Aeronautica* pilots' wings also appear in many photographs, worn on the left side of the uniform.

The photographic evidence does not show us any other insignia used by the Condor Legion, with the exception of the shield of the *Cuerpo de Ejército de Navarra* (Navarre Army Corps), one of the best formations of the Nationalist Army, with which the CL often operated. This emblem was worn by CL members on the centre of the right breast pocket (see Plate F2).

GERMAN AIRMEN IN SPAIN

Fighters: Jagdgruppe 88

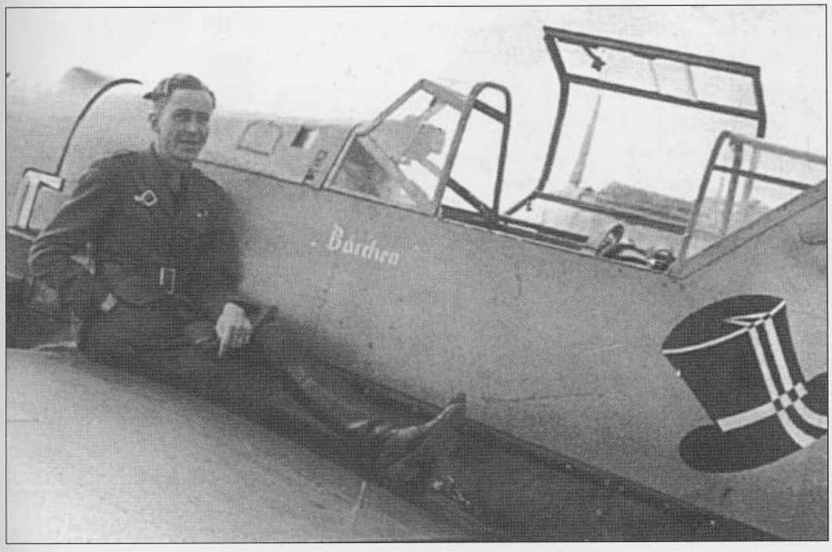
The additional fighters and pilots sent from Germany to join those already in Spain in October 1936 allowed the organization of Jagdgruppe 88 with a headquarters (Stab) and four squadrons (Staffeln) instead of the usual three, although 4.Staffel was fairly short-lived. There was also, for a very short time, a 5.Staffel. More importantly, the fighter trials squadron Versuchsjagdstaffel 88, despite being independent from J88, logically maintained close links with it during the few months of its existence.

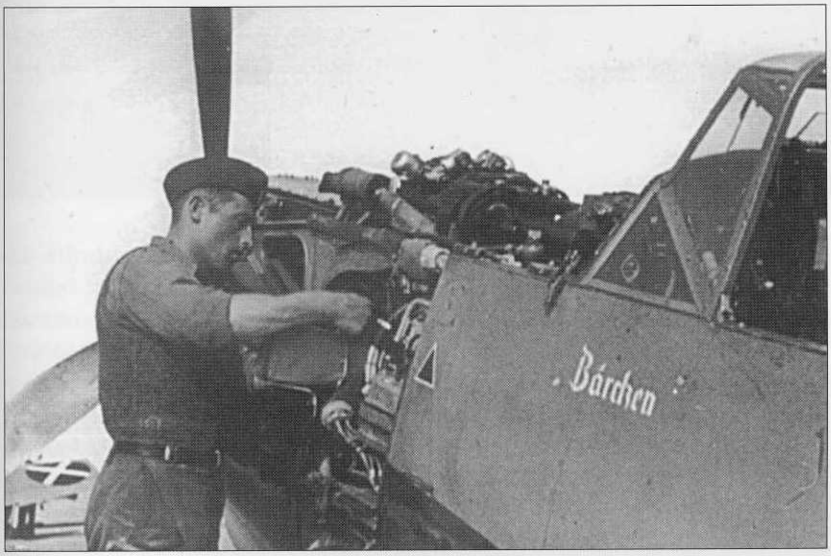
The Heinkel He 51 biplanes with which Jagdgruppe 88 was initially equipped were shown to be obsolete as air superiority fighters as soon as monoplane Soviet bombers and fighters started appearing over Spain. Before air supremacy could be gained the development of new German fighter types had to be completed urgently; and in November 1936 prototypes of the monoplane Messerschmitt Bf 109 and Heinkel He 112 were sent to Spain. The CL pilots preferred the Bf 109 and, in March 1937, they started to receive the first operational examples of what was indisputably the best fighter used in the Civil War.

The process of replacing the He 51 with the Bf 109 was slow, since the Messerschmitt factory was also under pressure to supply the Luftwaffe at home. For months the He 51 and Bf 109 co-existed in J88, with the monoplanes grouped into 2. and later 1.Staffel; while the jealous pilots of 3. and 4./J88 specialized in ground-attack missions with the He 51, the Bf 109s provided top cover. This was the birth of the Luftwaffe's systematic close support operations, which would be characteristic of the *Blitzkreig* tactics of 1939–41. The combination of dropping small bombs and strafing with machine guns, delivered with the appropriate intensity, often achieved decisive results. During the Civil War the infantry on both sides proved susceptible to aerial attacks; beyond their practical effects, these had a considerable impact on soldiers' morale, sometimes causing panic-stricken retreats. Direct air attacks were used both in offensive operations (to open breaches in the enemy's front lines) and in defence (to stop enemy advances).

The German interest in the use of aircraft in direct support of ground forces was so strong that VJ Staffel 88 was also charged with evaluating other models of aircraft designed to act as dive-bombers. These included the Heinkel He 50 and Henschel Hs 123 biplanes, which were very capable strafers, and even the Junkers Ju 87 Stuka – of

This camouflaged He 51 has just landed after a mission; note, below the cockpit, the cartoon crow emblem of 1./J88. In the blazing Spanish summers ground crews often worked stripped to a pair of shorts or swimming trunks. In summer 1937 the two He 51 ground-attack Staffeln played an important part in halting the Republican breakthrough at Brunete. In these intense battles 3./J88 was led by Oblt Adolf Galland, who devised a way to convert the auxiliary fuel tank under the belly into an incendiary bomb. He was nevertheless unsuccessful in extending his Spanish tour for long enough to receive a Bf 109, and thus left Spain without achieving any aerial victories. He did keep 3./J88's Mickey Mouse emblem, however, adopting it as his personal marking when he was finally posted to a Messerschmitt unit after the Polish campaign. (Arraéz)

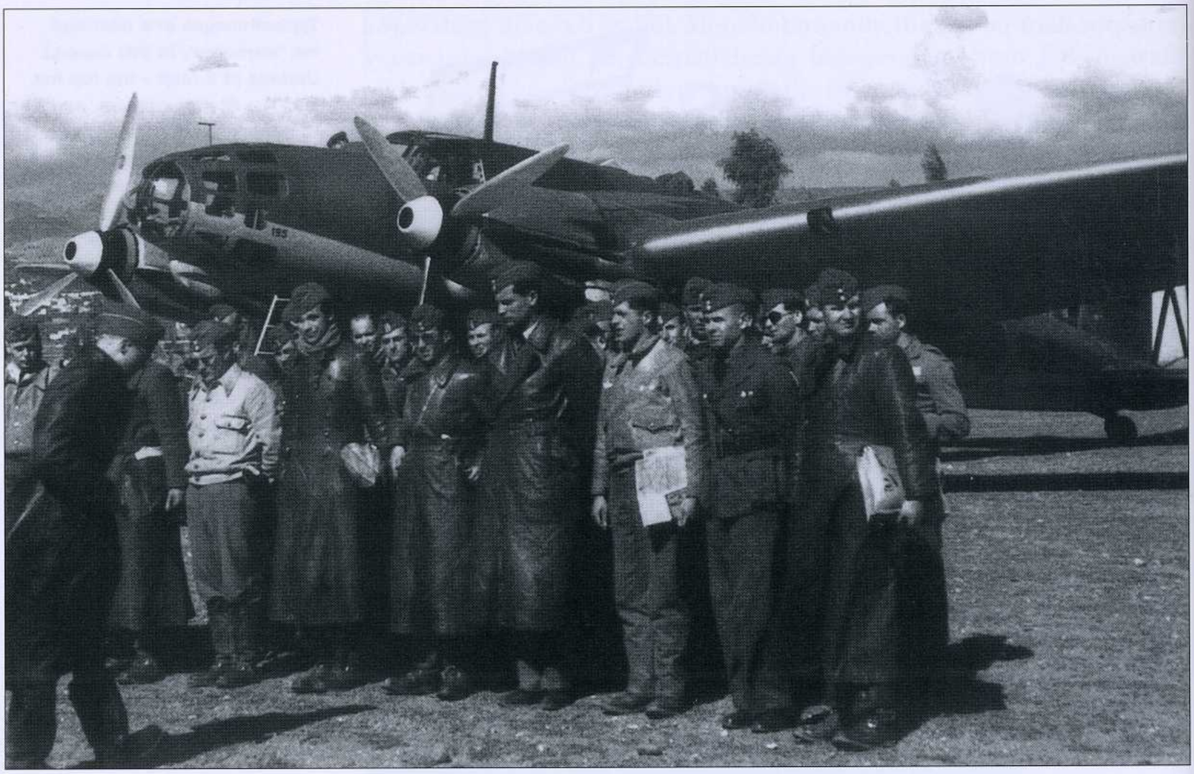




Typical images of a pilot and his 'warhorse', in this case Lt Ursinus of 2./J88 – the top hat was the Staffel emblem, and 'Bárchen' the individual aircraft name. The closer view shows an unsung hero – the groundcrew mechanic, whose contribution to success was as essential as the pilot's. The Bf 109B's armament was a pair of 7.92mm machine guns mounted on top of the engine and a third firing through the propeller spinner. The Bf 109C version, which arrived in July 1938, had two nose and two wing guns and an up-rated engine; this was the aircraft with which Werner Mölders rapidly became the Condor Legion's top-scoring ace. (Arráez)

which some served briefly as a 5.Staffel of J88 before being transferred to K88. This 5./J88, during its short life, then received a small number of Arado Ar 68 biplanes, obsolete as day fighters; they were to test these as night fighters, but with very little success.

Naturally, Jagdgruppe 88 did not limit themselves to ground-attack operations; as soon as enough Bf 109s were available the He 51s were transferred to the Spanish and J88 devoted themselves to aerial dogfights against enemy fighters, with great effect. It was in Spain in 1938 that the Germans accomplished a revolution in tactics that was going to allow them to dominate the skies of Europe in the initial phase of World War II. Instead of the rigid squadron combat formations used by other countries, J88 tested the use of the Rotte (a pair of fighter aircraft) and the Schwarm (a pair of Rotten) as basic combat formations. These small, flexible formations – implemented in Spain by Werner Mölders – allowed a high degree of tactical freedom, which the German pilots exploited with great success.



Crews of a Staffel of K88 Heinkel He 111s receive their final instructions before departing on a mission. The amount of freedom permitted in the choice of clothing is self-evident. Note the number wearing long leather coats; the He 111B model did not have a plexiglass hood over the upper gun position, and its belly position was an open-fronted 'dustbin' lowered after take-off. This Heinkel is finished in three-colour camouflage; propeller spinners and blade tips were often painted in red/yellow/red Spanish stripes. (Calpasoro)

Besides allowing the development of new tactics, service with the CL gave experience in real combat conditions to a large number of fighter pilots. Seven of the German pilots who achieved more than 100 air victories in World War II (Borchers, Galland, Ihlefeld, Lützow, Mölders, Oesau and Wilcke) were veterans of Spain, and the first five who surpassed that number had been members of the Condor Legion. If individual German fighter pilots did not obtain even more victories in Spain, it was in part because for a long time many had to be content with the He 51, and also because their Spanish tours rarely lasted more than six months, in order to allow the maximum number of pilots a chance to serve there. Overall, the German pilots obtained 314 confirmed air victories in Spain, shared among 118 pilots (plus another 70 classified as 'probable'). While many fighter pilots completed their tours of duty without having made a 'kill', all benefited from extensive experience of combat flying. The highest scoring German ace in Spain was Mölders, with 14 kills (considerably fewer than the leading Spanish Nationalist ace, Joaquín García Morato, who achieved 40 victories, albeit during the whole course of the war). As for losses, 26 German fighter pilots were killed in action in Spain, and a further eight were lost from illness or accident.

Bombers: Kampfgruppe 88 & Stuka 88

As described, the first Ju 52s to arrive in Spain were used by the Germans mainly for transport missions. With the creation of K88 the Ju 52s ceased to fly airlift missions and were committed to bombing. The group was created with a headquarters and three Staffeln, and the additional Ju 52s were flown to Spain via Italy and Spanish Morocco. Unlike the fighter squadrons, which often operated dispersed, K88 normally kept its

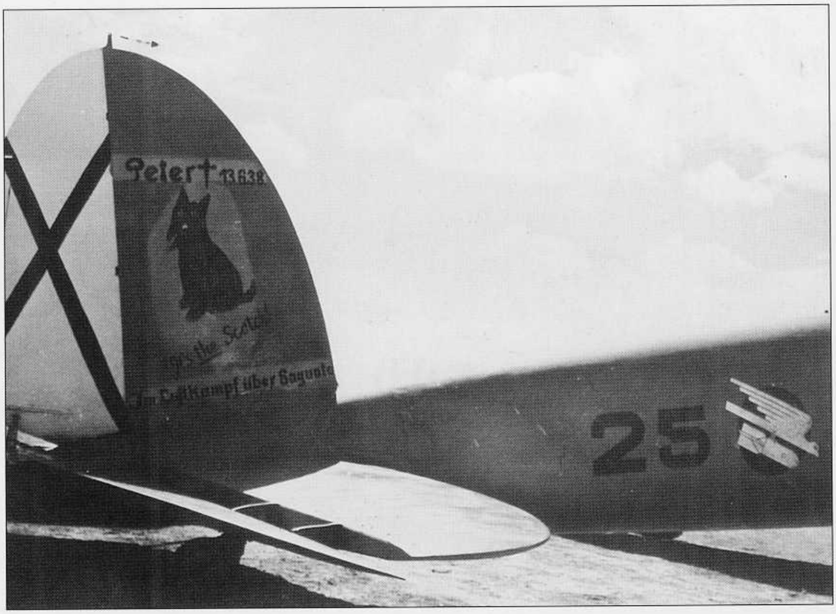
Air and ground crews of an He 111B of 1./K88. The 'lucky sweep' emblem on the tail is not the squadron badge, but this crew's individual insignia. (Calpasoro)

squadrons grouped for maximum concentration and effectiveness in its bombing missions. In keeping with German doctrine, most of its missions were in tactical support of ground forces; but the group also carried out some strategic missions including the bombing of ports, such as Cartagena – the point of entry for Soviet aid to the Republic.

At the end of 1936, only shortly after its formation, K88's effectiveness was largely negated by the arrival of modern Soviet fighters such as the Polikarpov I-15 biplane and I-16 monoplane. Losses increased rapidly, and the Ju 52s were almost entirely restricted to night operations. As a result, some of the crews returned to Germany in December 1936 to receive instruction in the more modern bombers then becoming available – the twin-engined Heinkel He 111, Dornier Do 17 and Junkers Ju 86; and four of each of these models arrived in Spain to form Versuchsbomberstaffel 88 (VB88). In contrast to VJ88, this unit took a direct part in combat operations, being integrated as an additional squadron in K88. The experience gained by VB88 quickly led to the rejection of the Ju 86; the Do 17 was recommended for reconnaissance missions, and the He 111 was chosen as the main equipment for bomber squadrons.

However, re-equipping K88 with the He 111B was a slow process. The trial squadron became 4.Staffel in July 1937, the first to be entirely equipped with the He 111; but K88 did not complete equipping its three original Staffeln with Heinkels until July 1938, when 4.Staffel was de-activated.

On 26 April 1937, during the Nationalist operations to conquer the Basque provinces on the north-west coast, K88 together with some Italian aircraft attacked the small town of Guernica with devastating effect, killing many civilians. Contemporary claims of 'thousands' of



Far from the strict discipline of the home-based Luftwaffe, many Condor Legion crews seem to have indulged a taste for prominent personal artwork on their machines. Heinkel He 111B-2 '25.15' displays two examples. The eagle-and-bomb motif on the fuselage disc would be perpetuated in the World War II emblem of KG53 'Legion Condor'. On both sides of the tail is painted a tribute to a black Scottie dog apparently killed in action, recalling the advertisements for a famous brand of whisky. Above the dog we read 'Peter [memorial sword] 13.6.38'; on a slant below him, 'It's the Scotch!'; and at the base, 'Im Luftkampf über Sagunto'. (Hans Obert)

dead, made in the international press on behalf of the Popular Front, were exaggerated; the actual number has never been absolutely established, but is estimated at around 300 killed. Republican propaganda painted this as a pure 'terror' attack, linking it to the fact that Guernica is the site of an ancient oak tree which is the symbol of the Basque traditions of home rule. In reality the town was a point on the route by which Popular Front forces were withdrawing, and Guernica's river bridge was a legitimate military target. Nevertheless, while there was no intentional aim of causing civilian deaths, the apparent carelessness over them was undoubtedly the war's greatest propaganda gift to the Popular Front; its effect was multiplied by the clumsy denials of the Nationalist authorities, who attempted to blame the destruction of Guernica on the 'Reds'.

If anything, rather than symbolizing a deliberate targeting of civilian populations by the Condor Legion as a strategic war aim, the experience of K88 served to confirm the theories of Luftwaffe planners: instead of developing heavy bombers for strategic missions, they decided to concentrate on equipping Germany's bomber force with twin-engined medium types specifically to support the actions of ground forces as a key element in Blitzkrieg.

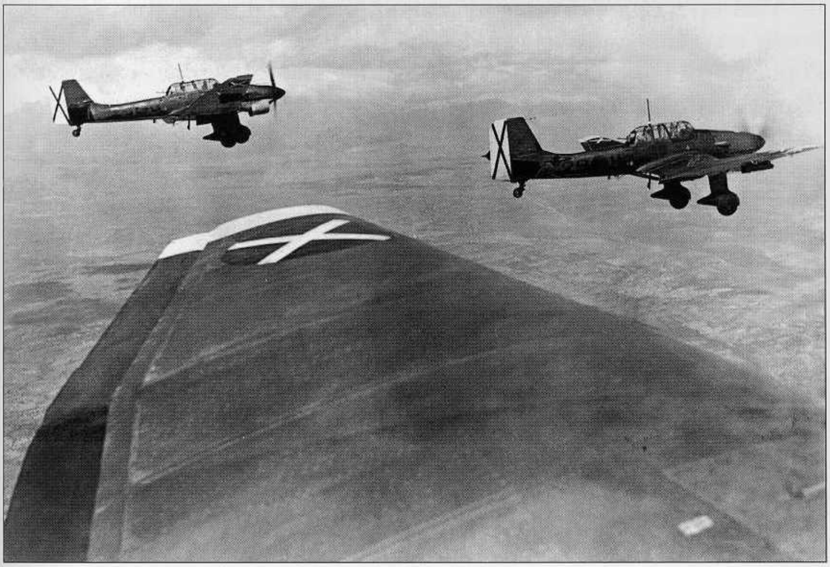
The pursuit of this doctrine also saw the Luftwaffe testing in Spain the effectiveness of the Sturzkampfflugzeug or 'Stuka' – the purpose-designed dive-bomber. Trials with the Heinkel He 50 and Henschel Hs 123 have already been mentioned, but the Stuka *par excellence* was the Junkers Ju 87. Its use in Spain was surrounded by secrecy; it was committed only in very small numbers, and none were handed over to the Spanish. For this reason the Condor Legion's use of the Ju 87 remained generally unknown for some time. One prototype and three of the Ju 87A series made their debut in Spain from November 1936 as part of VJ88. When that unit was disbanded they were placed in 5./J88, while it was the Hs 123s that were grouped in a new autonomous unit christened 'Stuka 88'. Nevertheless, the Germans subsequently rejected the Hs 123 as a dive-bomber and gave their planes of this model to the Spanish; meanwhile a few (perhaps eight?) B-series Ju 87s were sent to Spain in 1938 to continue testing weapons and tactics. Stuka 88 finally became the Ju 87 squadron; it was organically linked with K88, and Ju 87 attacks were usually combined with those by He 111s. Although the Ju 87's participation in Spain was minimal, it was evaluated very positively, with a consequent Luftwaffe commitment to this type in time for the Polish and Western campaigns of 1939–40.

Since it operated multi-seat aircraft, K88 was unsurprisingly the Condor Legion unit that suffered the highest casualties: it lost 72 men in action and another 24 through accident or illness.

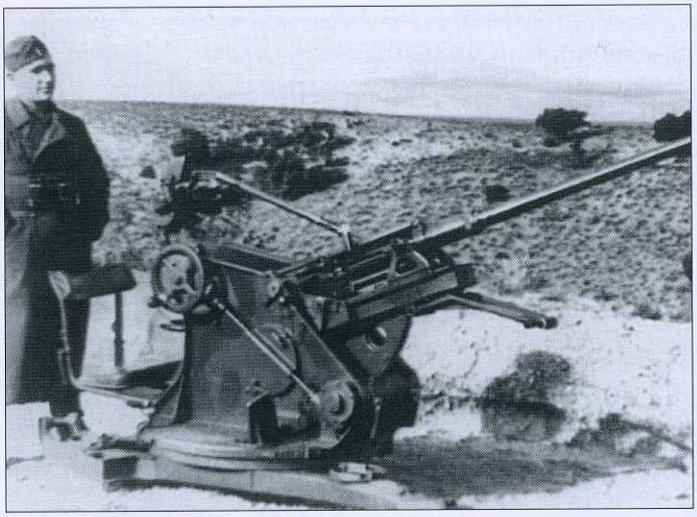
Reconnaissance: A88 & AS88

Aerial reconnaissance always attracts less public interest than the operations of fighters or bombers; but in German operational doctrine, which regarded the Luftwaffe as fundamentally bound to co-operation with the Army, reconnaissance played a very important role. Even before the creation of the CL, Germany had sent the Nationalists small numbers of the Heinkel He 46 short-range reconnaissance aircraft and the He 45 medium-range type. With the foundation of the CL and, within it, A88, more He 46s and He 45s were sent to Spain, as were a significant number of Heinkel He 70s – a very fast aircraft used for both light bombing missions and long-range reconnaissance. The He 70's performance in Spain failed to win the enthusiasm of the German pilots; but they formed a long-range reconnaissance Staffel, while a close reconnaissance Staffel was created with the He 45s, and the He 46s were quickly handed over to the Spanish.

Given the typically aggressive nature of the Luftwaffe pilots, the crews of A88 did not limit themselves to reconnaissance missions, but took part in combat as often as possible. The He 45s participated in close co-operation missions with the ground forces, while the He 70s carried out several raids with small bombloads deep behind enemy lines – though these proved to be more spectacular than effective.



Rare photograph of three of the very few Junkers Ju 87B Stukas that served in Spain, in flight on the Brunete front in 1938; note the type number '29', and the typical wing and wingtip markings. (Topham Picturepoint)



A gunner of Flak 88 with a 20mm AA cannon. Anti-aircraft guns and instructors were sent to Spain as part of the very first German aid, and three light batteries formed part of F88 from late 1936. (Arráez)

In September 1937, the process of handing over the He 70s to the Spanish began, and they were gradually replaced with Dornier Do 17s. Although this led to A88 becoming even more involved in bombing missions in co-operation with K88, the unit's main task remained reconnaissance. The Germans had photographic equipment unavailable to the Spanish or the Italians, and daily flights by Do 17s over sectors of the front where important operations were underway provided the Nationalist Army staffs with valuable information. Since A88 was the only unit able to carry out this vital task, it was finally restricted to such missions.

Nevertheless, the far from negligible qualities of the Do 17 as a bomber were put to use; several were handed over to the Spanish in order to form their own bomber squadrons. As far as the He 45s were concerned, the more modern and efficient Henschel Hs 126s slowly replaced them. At the same time, once the Do 17 began arriving in theatre, the reconnaissance unit was organized into a single Staffel, subdivided into several Ketten (three-plane patrols).

The other Condor Legion unit that combined both reconnaissance and combat tasks was *(gemischte) Aufklärungs und Bombensstaffel (See) 88* (AS88) – 'Mixed Maritime Reconnaissance/Bomber Squadron 88', often known simply as Seefliegerstaffel 88. In September 1936, Sonderstab W had already decided to send two seaplanes to Spain: one single-engined Heinkel He 60 and one twin-engined He 59. While their first mission was to escort the German merchant ships carrying supplies to the Nationalists, by October 1936 they had started to carry out missions against enemy sea traffic, and the creation of AS88 brought an increase in the number of available seaplanes.

After operating for some time along the Andalusian coast, AS88 was finally transferred to the island of Mallorca (Majorca). At this time the Popular Front only controlled ports on the Spanish Mediterranean coast (Barcelona, Valencia, Alicante, Cartagena, and other minor harbours), and all sea traffic arriving there – especially military supplies from the USSR via the Black Sea – could easily be attacked from Mallorca. AS88 actively co-operated with the Nationalist Navy in reconnaissance duties; it also carried out bombing and strafing (though rarely torpedo) attacks against a large number of ship, ports and other coastal cities, and even inland targets. This small unit, the only one consistently to operate separately from the rest of the CL, achieved remarkable results. Despite their small numbers, the seaplanes of AS88 managed to sink 52 vessels, albeit mostly of modest size. The He 59s and He 60s gave good service and only towards the end of the war were a small number of more modern single-engined Arado Ar 95s and twin-engined Heinkel He 115s sent to replace them; these latter types played only a very small part. A88 lost 23 dead (four of them through illness or accident), and AS88 a further 17 dead (of whom five through illness or accident).

Instruction on the 8.8cm Flak gun; this weapon's very effective qualities were immediately appreciated, and Spain purchased large numbers. The Spanish crew are dressed in overcoats; at centre, in service dress with riding boots, is their German instructor from 9./F88. (Molina)

Apart from the aircraft already mentioned, the Condor Legion did use a few other types. The Staff (S88) used the Junkers W 34, Fieseler Fi 156 Storch, Messerschmitt Bf 108 Taifun and Klemm Kl 32 for liaison missions. The logistical support unit Park 88 also operated the Storch, and the meteorological unit W88 the Junkers W 34. The CL did not have a squadron of transport aircraft, but fighter and bomber squadrons had their own Ju 52s for these tasks, and in the case of AS88, a seaplane version of the trimotor. Other Ju 52s acted as weekly shuttles, linking the CL headquarters in Spain with Sonderstab W in Berlin.

Luftwaffe ground units

Although mention of the Condor Legion always brings its flying units to mind, in fact its largest unit was the **anti-aircraft artillery group**, F88, with an establishment of 1,400 men. Unlike other countries at that time, German AA artillery (Flak) formed part of the Air Force rather than the Army.

Just after the outbreak of the Civil War, Germany sent to Spain a light AA battery with 20mm cannon and a heavy battery with 8.8cm guns. When the CL was created the number of Flak units in Spain was increased to four heavy batteries and three light batteries. A fifth battery of 8.8cm guns was added later; and for a time the light batteries, initially given one platoon each of 3.7cm weapons, were totally equipped with these pieces. F88 also included a searchlight platoon, and its own ammunition column. A new 9.Batterie was subsequently created to instruct Spanish artillerymen.

Initially, this powerful Flak group was intended for defending the airfields occupied by the German squadrons, and received precise orders prohibiting the use of its weapons against ground targets. In reality, however, the 20mm, 3.7cm, and above all the highly effective 8.8cm were used against enemy vehicles and fortifications with tremendous effect. This effectiveness of AA artillery in the ground role

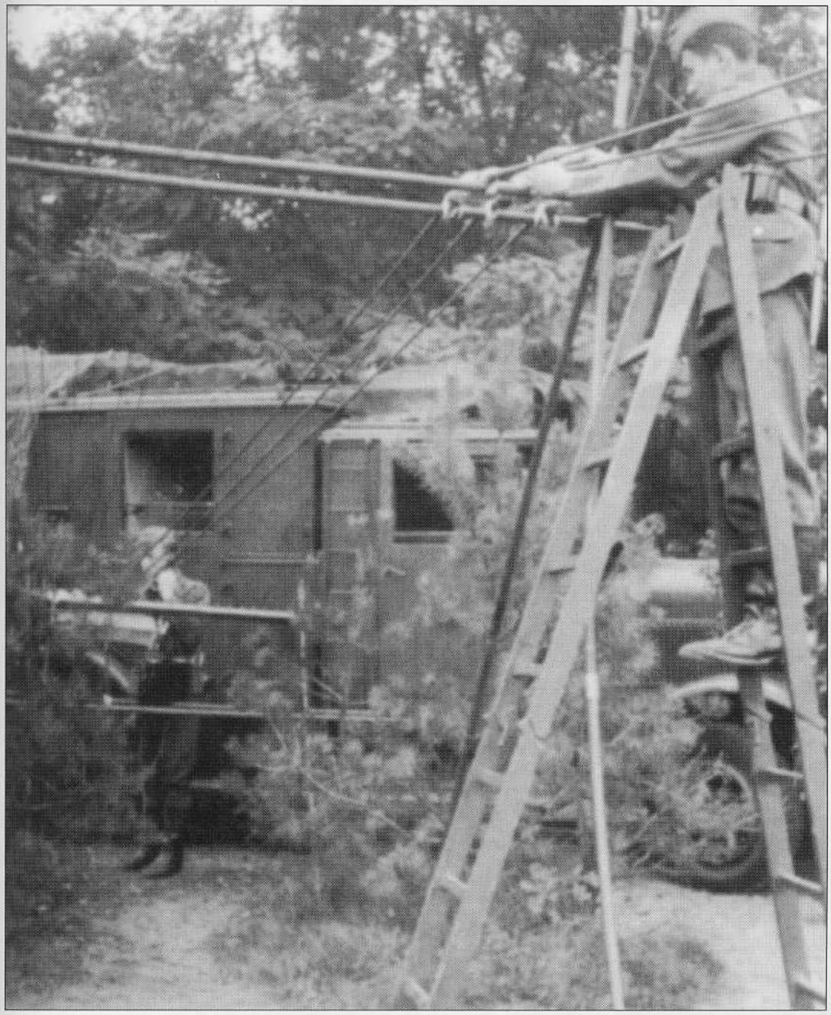
The sophisticated fire control equipment of the 8.8cm batteries was one of the keys to their success. The significant results achieved by Abteilung F88 and their Spanish students revealed this weapon's huge potential to the German authorities, who exploited it to the full during World War II. (Álvaro)

proved to be one of the most important lessons Germany learned from the Civil War, and one she applied with devastating results in World War II. During the war the 8.8cm guns brought down 61 enemy planes, but their greatest successes were achieved against ground targets. Their accuracy, flat trajectory and high rate of fire earned them a place in the vanguard of all Nationalist offensives, especially towards the end of the war when the Republican Air Force had been swept from the skies. Instead of being organized as a more or less static unit, F88 was completely motorized and easily able to follow ground troops into the attack.

The Spanish, for their part, were delighted with the effectiveness of the 8.8cm, and bought enough from Germany to equip nine batteries of their own (Germany also sold them obsolete 7.5cm weapons). Before the war Spain's AA artillery arm was very weak, and what little there was had been divided between the two sides at the outbreak of hostilities; the German contribution in this respect was therefore decisive for the Nationalist Army.

The establishment of the Condor Legion **signals battalion** was atypical, since it included within its ranks all the different specializations of the Luftwaffe signals corps. The 1st Company was responsible for telephone communications; as Spain's telephone network was underdeveloped, the company included a large platoon dedicated to the task of establishing long distance telephone lines. The 2nd was the radio communications company, although it also included a signals intelligence detachment. The 3rd was a Flugmelde Kompanie, a ground observer company devoted to aircraft warning. The 4th was a Flugsicherung Kompanie, a unit devoted to air traffic control; since this facility was not very developed in Spain, personnel of Ln88 also set up two centres to direct all air traffic over the country – Flugsicherung Nord in Salamanca and Flugsicherung Sud in Seville. In numbers of personnel, Ln88 was the second most important unit in the Condor Legion. The Luftwaffe signals corps gained a lot of experience in Spain, both in the practical application of its equipment and in all aspects of the tactics it employed (air–ground and ground–ground communications, aircraft recognition service, etc.); this was obviously critical to the kind of air–ground warfare that Germany was contemplating.

The **service and maintenance unit**, Park 88, also proved effective. Many of the aircraft used were new models that presented numerous technical problems, so many engineers from the various aeronautical companies had to travel to Spain to work on them on the spot. In addition, as the CL was an expeditionary force operating far from its logistics bases, the work of P88 was of paramount importance if this force was to be kept operating at its maximum level of efficiency. During the first few months of the CL's existence Seville was the headquarters of Park 88. However, from the battle for Madrid in November 1936 until the end of the war in March 1939, almost all the main battles took place in the northern half of the country, so P88 was moved to León. Here it



A heavily camouflaged Ln88 signals truck. The Condor Legion signals and signals intelligence units – the Luftwaffe's Ln88 and the Army's 'Imker-Horch Kompanie' – played an important though little-reported role in the Civil War. (Campesino)

was located far enough from the fronts to be out of danger, and at the same time had good connections with the ports of Vigo and Ferrol in the north-west – considerably nearer to Germany than the port of Seville.

Condor Legion casualties

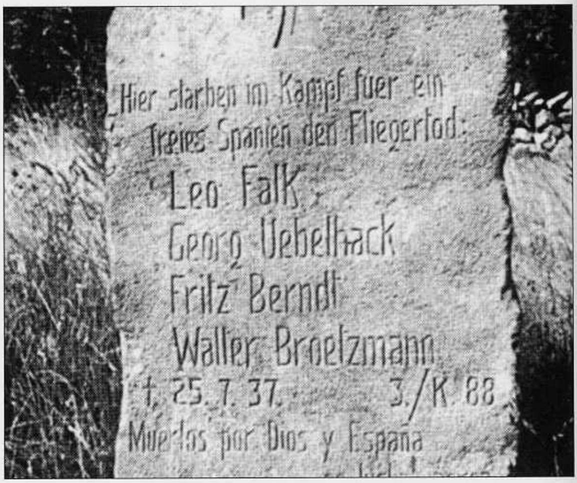
While deaths among aircrew of the CL reached a total of 170 men, deaths among the Luftwaffe ground units (Ln88, F88, S88 and P88) were only 96 in total, and illness or accidents were responsible for almost as many losses as combat.

To these Luftwaffe losses it is necessary to add those suffered among the personnel of the Heer and Kriegsmarine serving in the CL, giving a total figure of 299 dead. Other CL casualties (wounded in combat, injured in accidents or those suffering illness) totalled 588 men who needed hospitalization. The medical services worked well; the most serious cases were evacuated to Germany, and some of those listed as having died while serving with the CL did so after their return to Germany. (To avoid certain contagious diseases, supplies of bottled mineral water were sent directly from Germany; and since at that time it was far more the custom in Spain to drink wine rather than beer, supplies of the latter were also transported from the Reich for its legionaries.)

Summary of Luftwaffe aid

During the Civil War, the USSR delivered around 1,000 aircraft to the Popular Front, including the (for that time) modern Polikarpov I-15 and I-16 fighters, as well as Tupolev SB-2 bombers. Roughly another 500 aircraft were bought in by the Republic from other countries. Italy supported the Nationalists by sending them a total of 704 aircraft, according to Italian sources.

In comparison, the total number of aircraft sent by Germany to operate with the CL – as well as the small numbers sent prior to October 1936 – amounted to 610 machines. These represented 23 different models, but in reality the majority of the total consisted of only a few models which were used in significant numbers, the other types arriving only in small numbers. Some of the aircraft sent in the greatest numbers were fighters: the CL received 93 He 51 biplanes, and 139 Messerschmitt Bf 109s (94 of the B, C and D versions, and another 45 Bf 109Es). The He 51s not lost in combat, as well as some of the Bf 109s, were given to the Spanish either during or at the end of the war. Only one example of the Heinkel He 112 experimental fighter was sent, and just four of the disappointing Arado Ar 68 night fighters.


Hier starben im Kampf fuer ein
freies Spanien den Fliegertod:
Leo Falk
Georg Uebelhack
Fritz Berndt
Walter Broelzmann
† 25.7.37. 3./K 88
Muertos por Dios y España

Casualties: commemorative monoliths were raised wherever members of the Condor Legion fell. This monument lists the names of a crew from 3./K88: Leo Falk, Georg Uebelhack, Fritz Berndl and Walter Broelzmann, who died on 25 July 1937, when the Heinkels were flying from Salamanca during the intense fighting around Brunete. Note that no ranks are listed; and that the German inscription states that they died 'for a free Spain', while the Spanish text is 'for God and Spain'. The bomber group suffered the heaviest casualties of any Condor Legion unit. (Arias)

The CL received 67 Junkers Ju 52s, and those which survived were eventually given to the Spanish. To replace the trimotors in the bombing role, 97 Heinkel He 111s were sent from Germany (61 of the B version and 36 He 111Es). Apart from these, 32 Dornier Do 17s combined bombing with reconnaissance missions. Only five examples of the unsuccessful Ju 86 were sent to Spain. The concept of dive-bombing was tested with the He 50 (a single example), Henschel Hs 123 (18 machines) and Junkers Ju 87 (12 of which saw service in Spain, of prototype, A and B versions). All the Ju 87s – including the wreckage of any planes lost – were returned to Germany, but the remaining Hs 123s were transferred to the Spanish, who greatly appreciated them.

The numbers of pure reconnaissance planes flown by the CL were as follows: 28 He 70s, 25 He 45s, 20 He 46s, and only 8 Hs 126s. The CL operated a total of 27 He 59 seaplanes, and 7 He 60s; towards the end of the war 3 Ar 95s and 2 He 115s were sent to Spain. Liaison aircraft totalled 6 Fieseler Fi 156s and a few Junkers W 34s, 5 Messerschmitt Bf 108s and 4 Klemm Kl 32s.

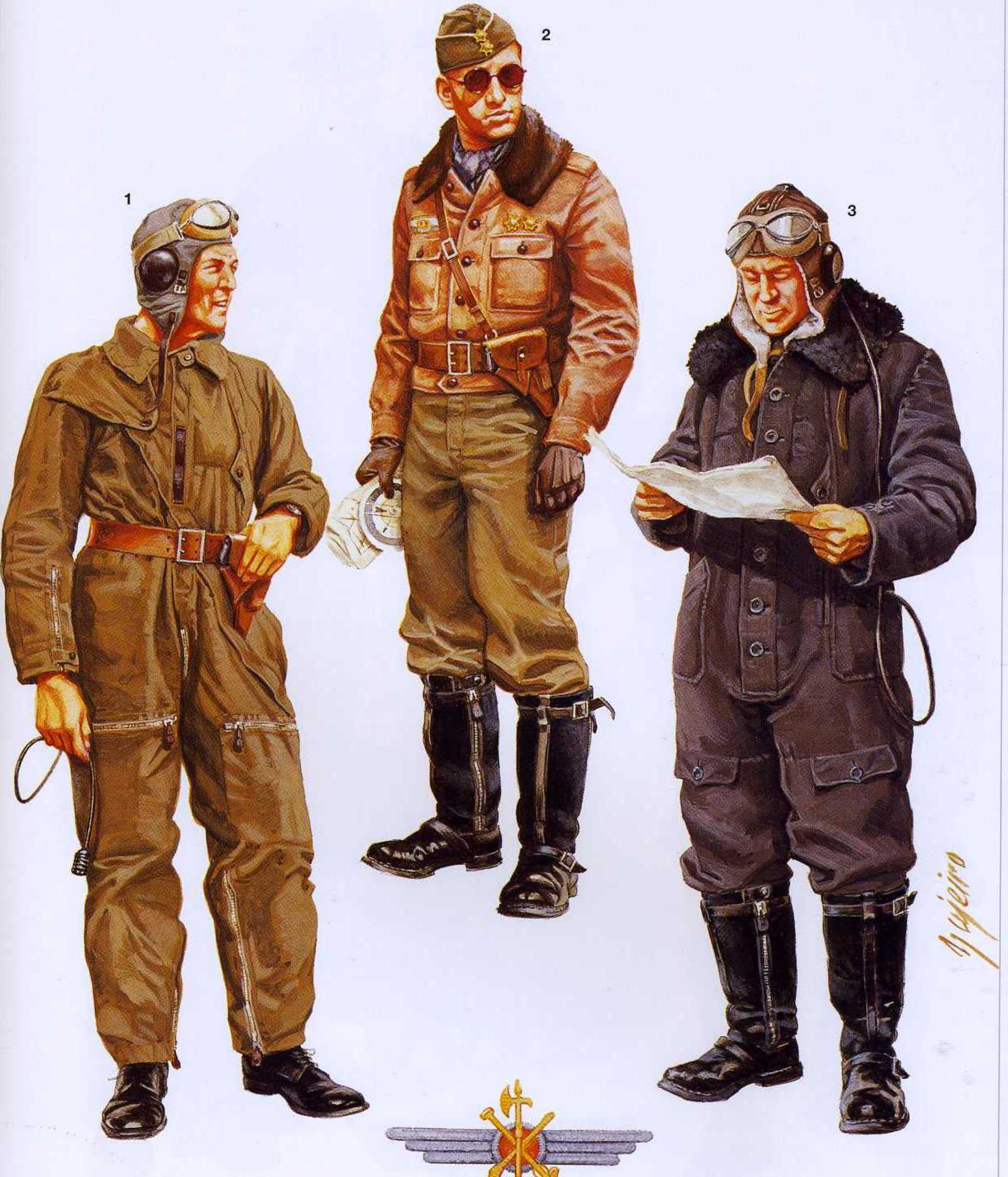
In all, the CL lost 72 planes shot down by enemy fire, and more than twice that many (160) due to other causes: destroyed on the ground by enemy action, and lost through mechanical failure or accidents.

The numerical importance of the CL to the Spanish Nationalist Air Force varied during the war, but it always remained significant. When it arrived in Spain with approximately 100 aircraft it provided vital reinforcements for the Nationalists, but with the simultaneous arrival of modern Soviet aircraft for the Republicans any advantage soon

(continued on page 41)

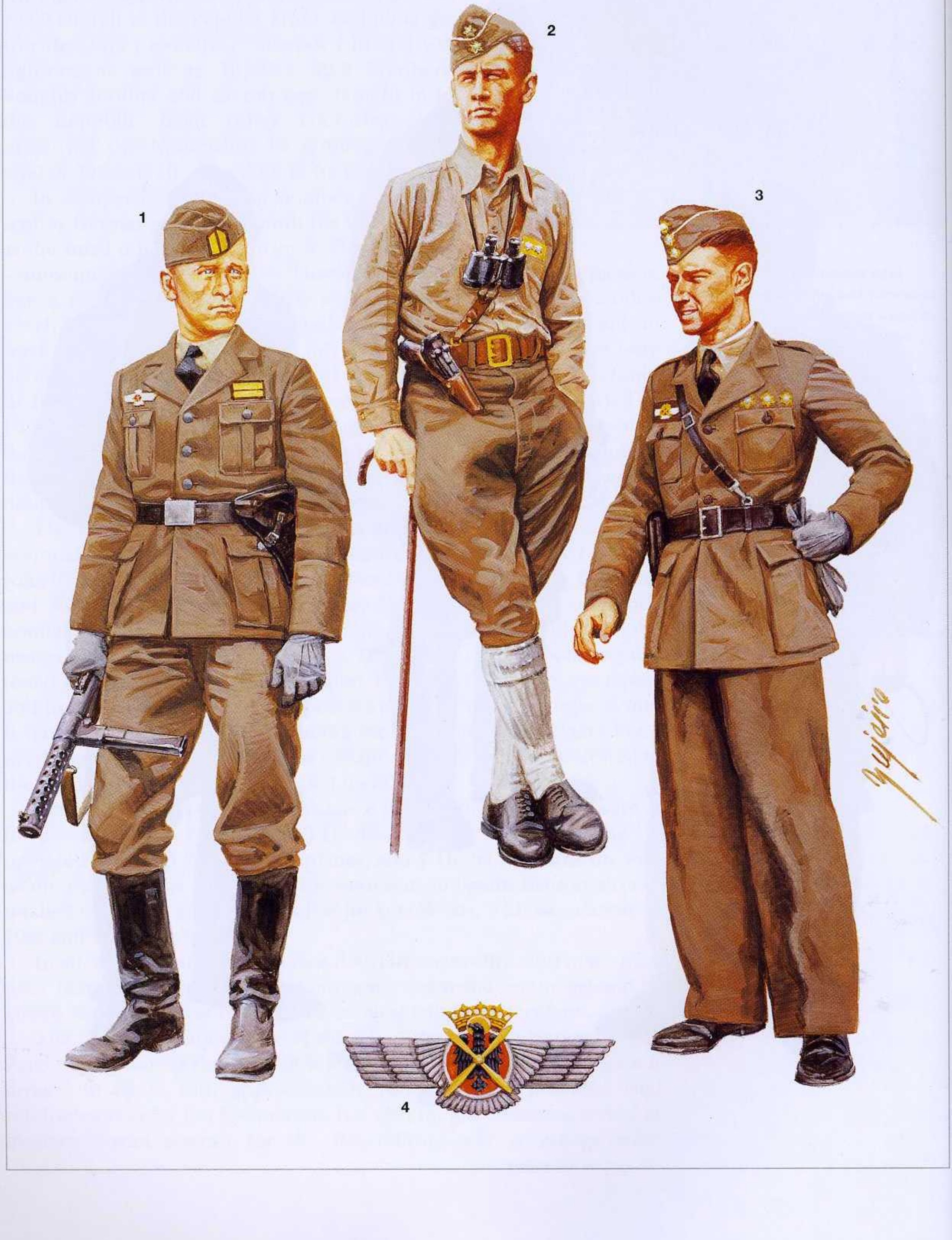
LUFTWAFFE

1: Bomber crewman, *Kampfgruppe 88*, 1937–39
2: *Leutnant* fighter pilot, *Jagdgruppe 88*
3: Bomber crewman, *Kampfgruppe 88*
4: *Aviación Legionaria* pilot's wings

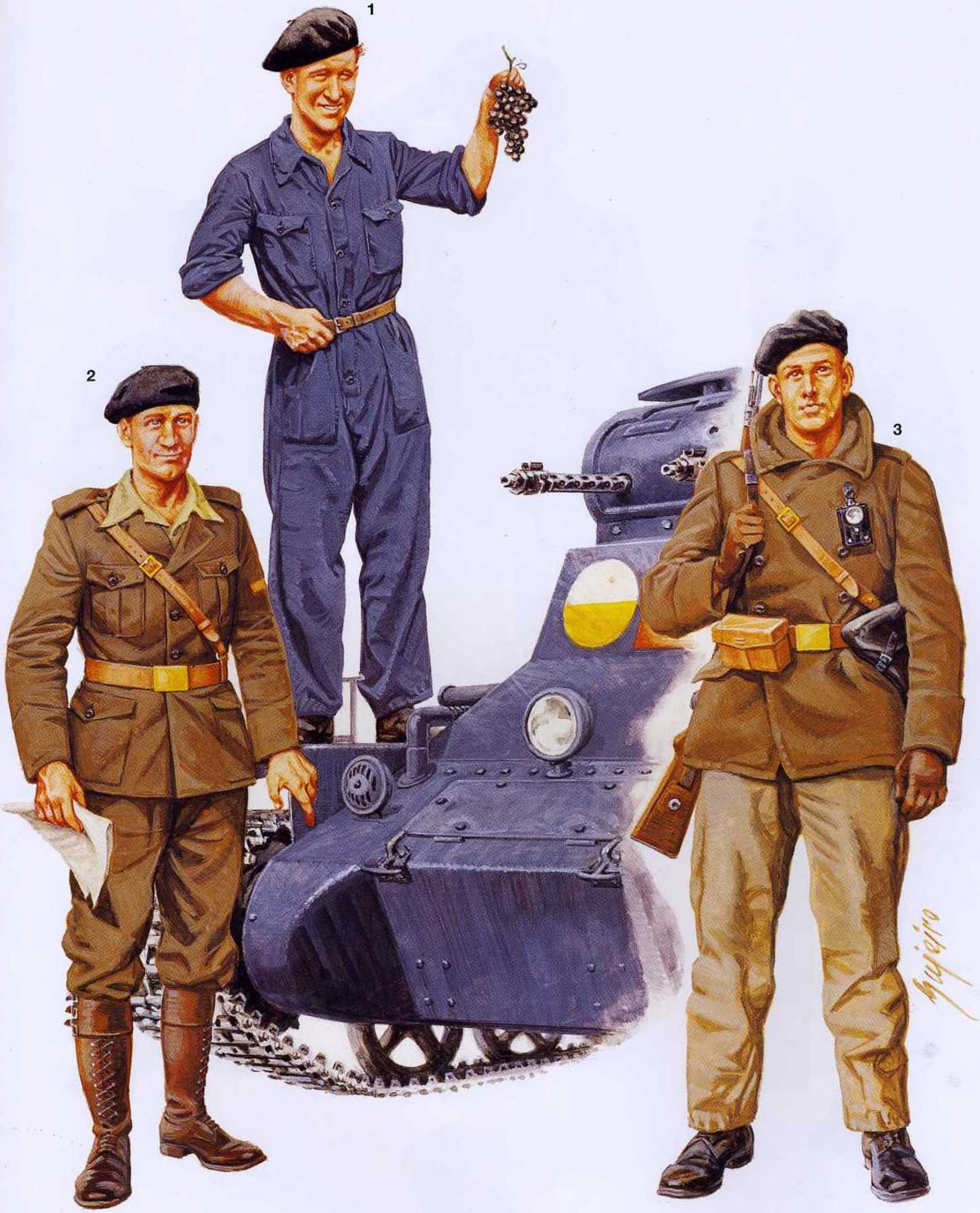


LUFTWAFFE

1: *Unteroffizier, Luftnachriten Abteilung (mot) 88*
2: *Leutnant* Graf von Hoyos
3: *Oberleutnant* Werner Mölders, *3./J88*
4: 1938-pattern Nationalist pilot's wings



PANZERGRUPPE DROHNE, OCTOBER 1936
1: *Legionär*, working dress
2: *Legionär*, walking-out dress
3: *Legionär*, winter sentry duty

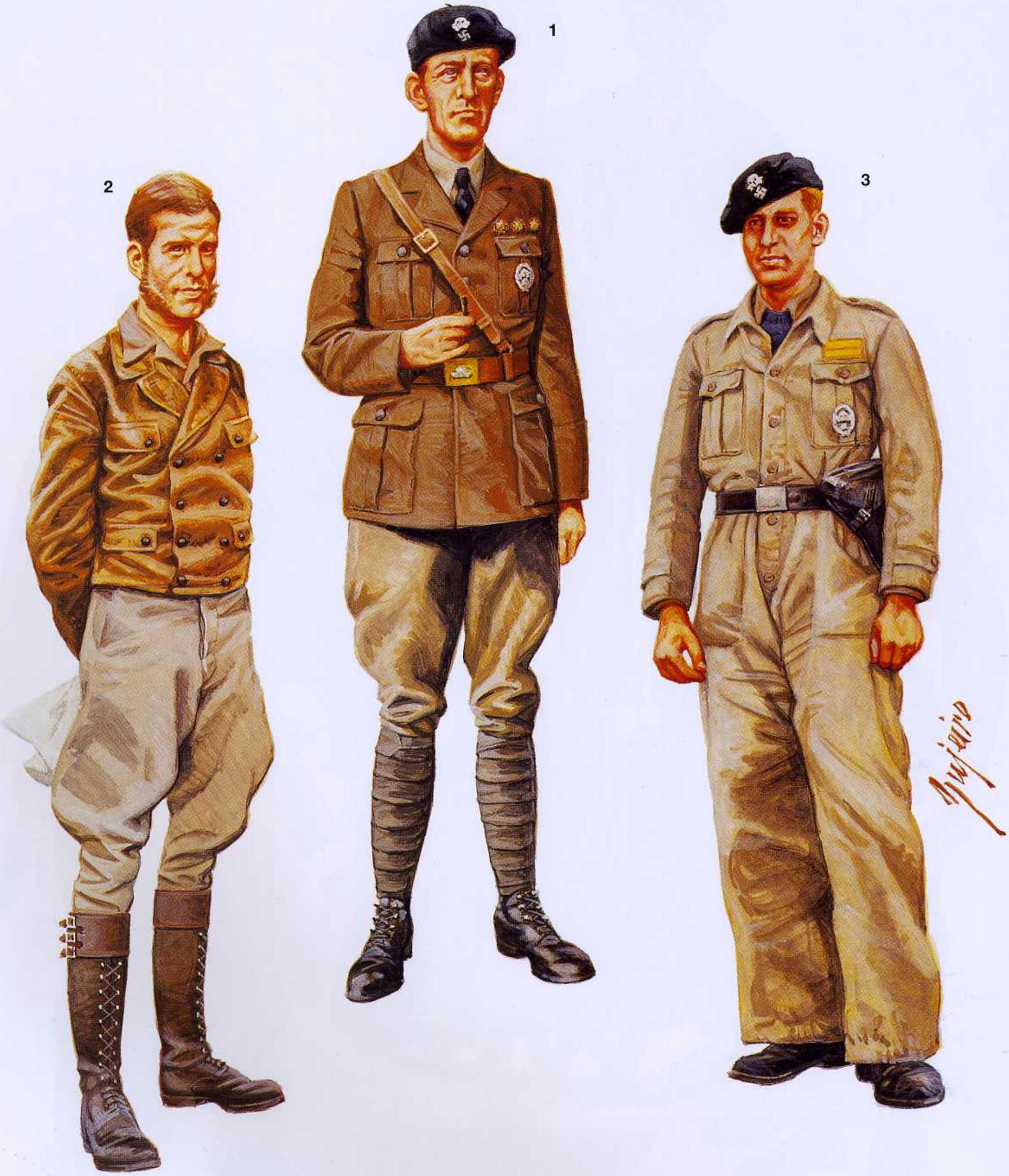


PANZERGRUPPE DROHNE, 1937–38

1: *Oberstleutnant* Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma

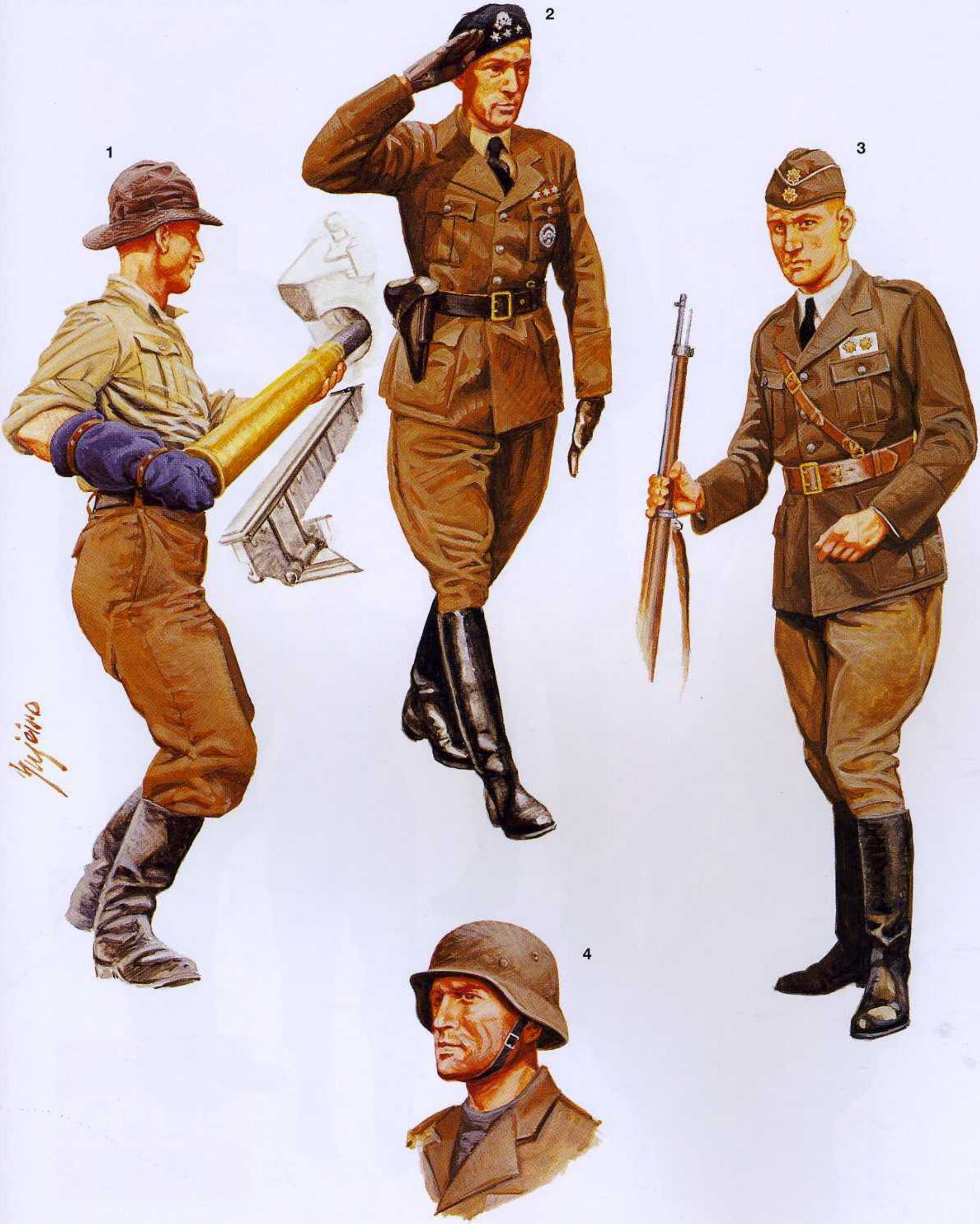
2: *Leutnant* Hans Hannibald von Mörner, 2.*Panzerkompanie*

3: *Unteroffizier*, working dress



D

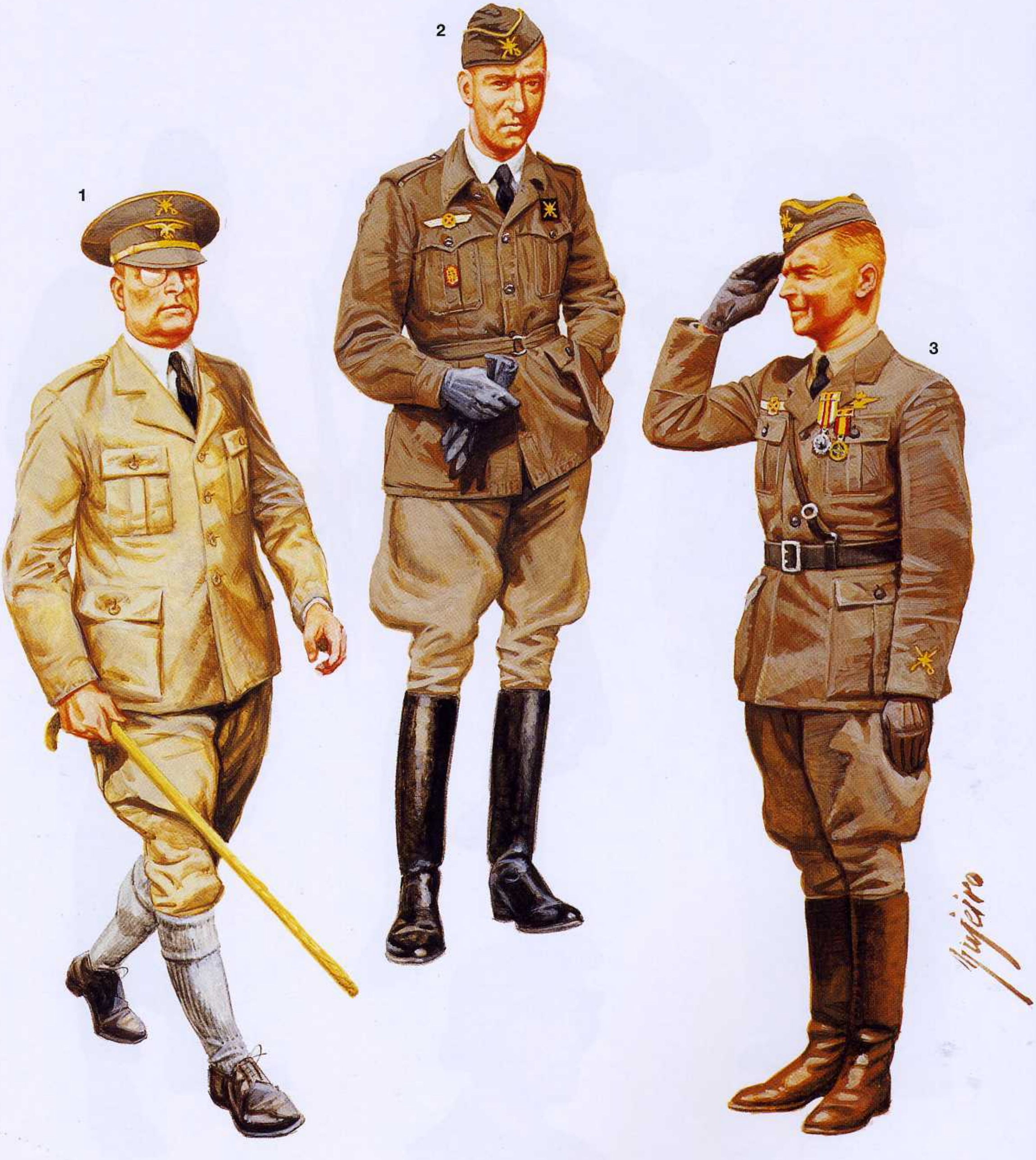
INSTRUCTORS
1: NCO, *Flak-Artillerie*
2: *Oberleutnant*, Toledo Infantry Academy
3: *Major* Erich Grosse, San Fernando Naval School
4: M1935 steel helmet



E

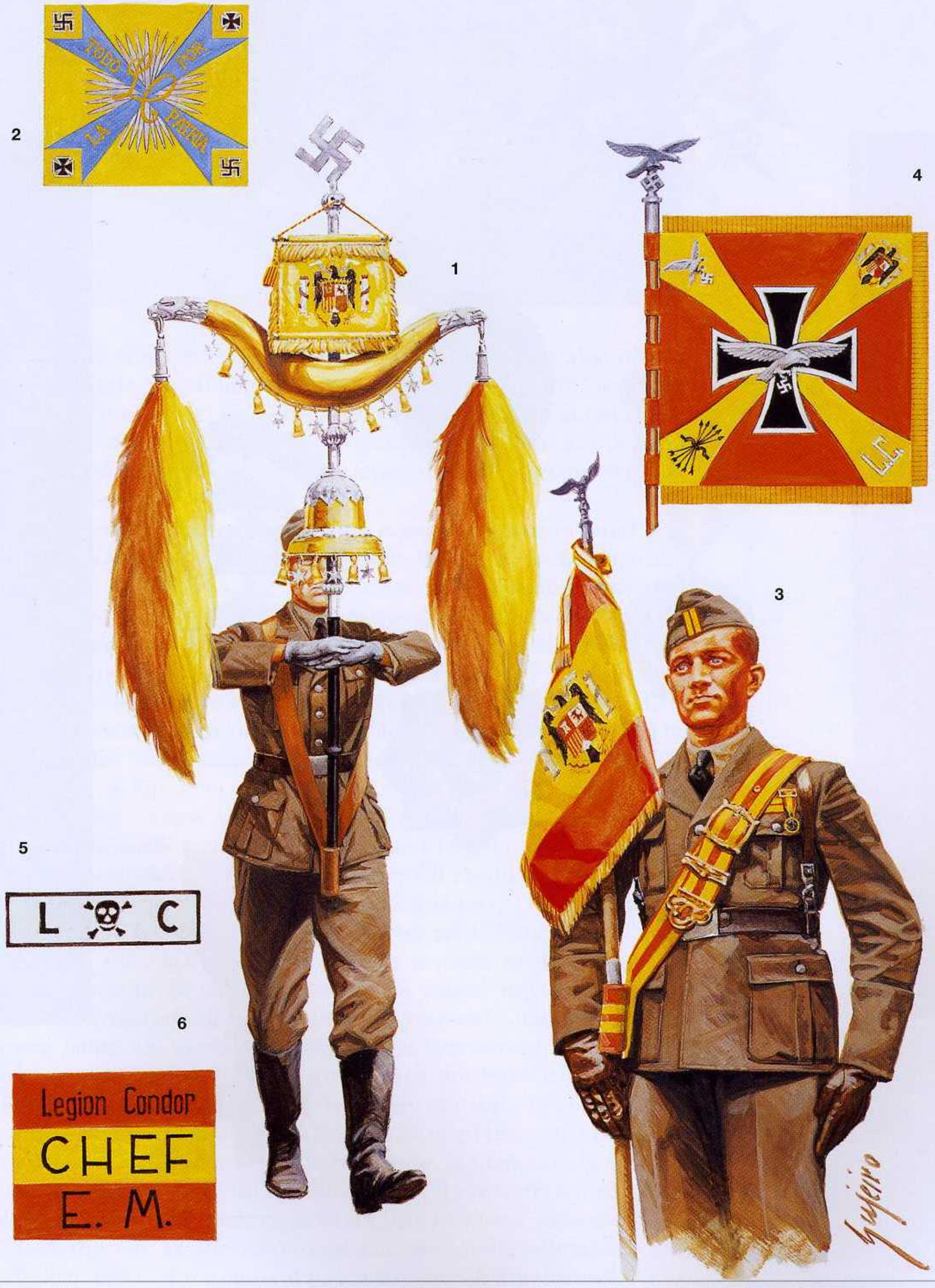
COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

1: *Generalmajor* Hugo Sperrle, summer 1937
2: *Generalmajor* Hellmuth Volkmann, 1938
3: *Generalmajor* Wolfram von Richthofen, 1939



F

CEREMONIAL, April–May 1939
1: *Schellenbaum*, Condor Legion Music Corps
2: Reverse of *Schellenbaum* banner
3: *Unteroffizier* standard-bearer
4: Obverse of Condor Legion standard
5: Vehicle licence plate
6: Car banner, Condor Legion chief-of-staff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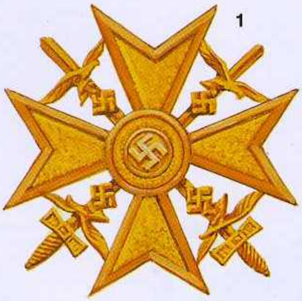

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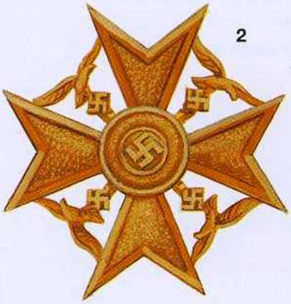

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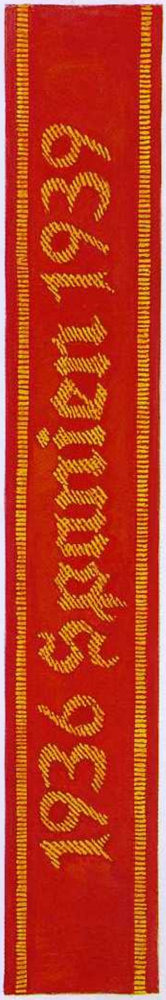

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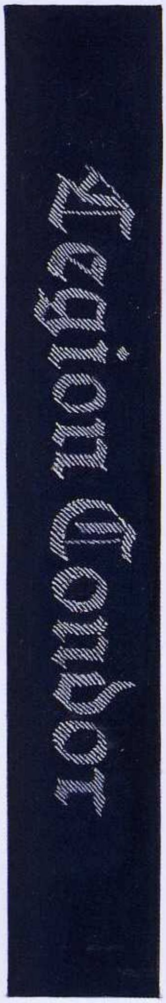

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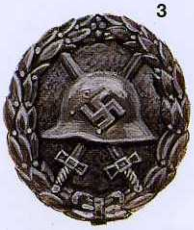

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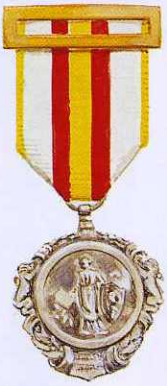

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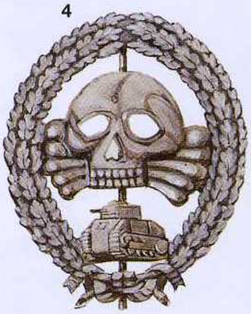

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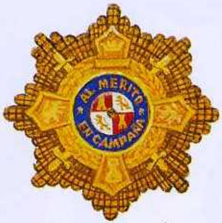

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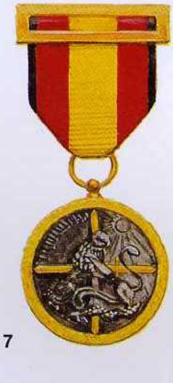

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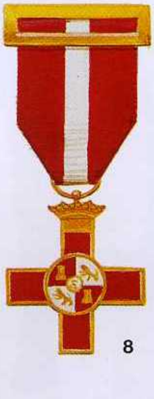
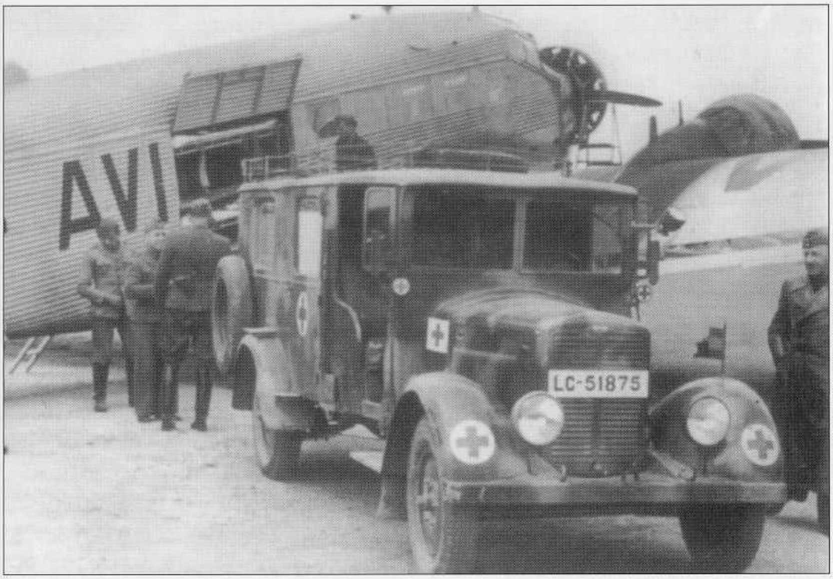




A Phänomen Granit 25H ambulance of San88 carries Condor Legion wounded to a Ju 52 for evacuation to Germany. Note the ambulance's number plate with the initials 'LC-', and the aircraft's civil livery. (Campesino)

disappeared. By May 1937 the Germans had around 100 combat planes operational, while the Italian *Aviación Legionaria* had 150, and the Spanish a similar number. At the beginning of the offensive in Catalonia in December 1938 the CL had 120 planes operational, but at the same date the Nationalist Air Force had 180 planes in action, and the *Aviación Legionaria* almost 200.

However, beyond the simple numbers, it must be borne in mind that many of the German aircraft represented the most technologically superior types available to the Nationalists. Although the authentic warhorse among the Nationalist fighters was undoubtedly the Fiat CR-32, used in large numbers by both the Italians and Spanish, the Bf 109 was beyond dispute the best fighter aircraft in Spain.

The CL always operated the most modern aircraft available; when newer models arrived from Germany the older types were transferred to the Spanish. The Nationalists also bought aircraft direct from Germany (103 in all, in addition to any that had been used originally by the Condor Legion). These were generally models that had become obsolete for Luftwaffe service (e.g. He 45 and He 51), although some advanced models which had not been accepted by the Luftwaffe were also purchased (e.g. 15 Heinkel He 112 fighters). Most of these purchases were in fact trainers, like the Bücker Bü 131 and Bü 133, and the Gotha Go 145. Spanish pilots not only learned to fly in German aircraft, but around 50 of them attended a course organized by the Luftwaffe in Germany itself (others attended courses in Italy). A handful of German pilots also worked as instructors at Spanish flying schools.

Spain provided a good testing ground for the Luftwaffe's aircraft; experience gained there firmed up the design concepts of aircraft over which the Germans still had doubts, and accelerated the replacement of obsolete biplanes with new monoplanes. Some models simply did not stand up to this trial (e.g. the Ju 86), while others were found more suitable roles in line with their capabilities (the Ju 52 as a pure transport plane, and the Do 17 for reconnaissance work). Dive-bombing was successfully tested and the most appropriate aircraft for this role – the

8.8cm Flak guns towed by massive SdKfz 7 halftracks during the victory parade held at Barajas airport, Madrid, on 12 May 1939. With about 1,400 all ranks, F88 was the largest of all Condor Legion units. (Molina)

Ju 87 – was identified. Those models found to be least suitable for modern warfare were relegated to training. It was, however, necessary to take risks: in December 1937 one Bf 109 and one Heinkel He 111 fell into the hands of the Republicans, who in turn gave them to the French, and some time later they were passed on to the Soviets. Two of Germany's future enemies were therefore able to study in detail two of the key aircraft used by the Luftwaffe at the beginning of World War II.

If the Germans were at first disconcerted to discover that the Soviet fighters delivered to the Popular Front were superior to their own He 51s and able to shoot down their Ju 52 bombers, once the Bf 109s were deployed they quickly regained their dominance. This bred an overconfidence in the technical superiority of their equipment, which was probably the worst consequence of the Luftwaffe's experience in Spain.

The Luftwaffe came into existence officially and publicly in March 1935. At that time it had 1,100 officers; by 1939, this figure had grown to 15,000. This peacetime increase in the size of an air force has no parallel in history; yet the Luftwaffe – created so late in the pre-war period, and so quickly organized – was to be a fundamental instrument of German victories during the first half of World War II. The experience gained in Spain was crucial in reaching this level of effectiveness; when World War II began just six months after the Nationalist victory, Germany had a comparatively greater number of combat-experienced aircrew than any of its future adversaries, and enormously so in the case of the Western democracies.

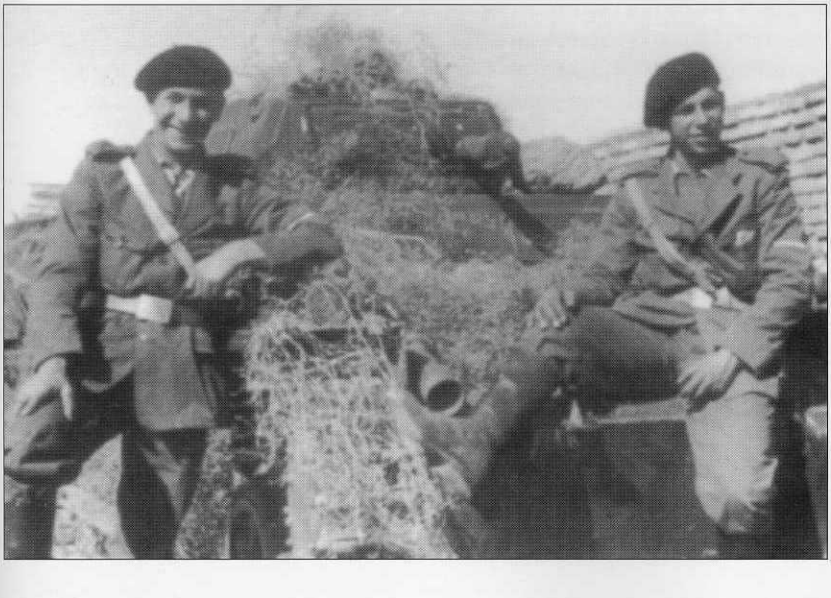
GERMAN SOLDIERS IN SPAIN

The Condor Legion's ground component, although smaller than the Luftwaffe contribution, was no less important. As already mentioned, even before the CL was formed the German Army had already sent to Spain a small armoured contingent, designated Panzergruppe Drohne. This contingent was reinforced after the creation of the CL, ending up with an establishment of 300 men organized into a headquarters staff, three tank instruction and trial companies (Lehrkompanien) with 16 tanks each, a transport company, a maintenance workshop, and a small anti-tank detachment.

The tanks provided were Panzer Is; by the end of 1936 there were 41 PzKw I Ausf As and 21 model Bs in Spain. Obviously, this did not constitute a powerful combat unit. In reality, however, Panzergruppe Drohne (or, to be more accurate, 'Imker-Drohne'), under the command of ObstLt von Thoma, had not been formed with combat in mind, but rather to train the Spanish in dealing with the technical demands of tanks as well as the tactical employment of armoured units. Unlike their Soviet counterparts with the Republican Army, the Germans of Panzergruppe Drohne only intervened in combat by chance, which is why their casualties from enemy action were minimal. ObstLt von Thoma did not conduct or direct armoured operations; but he was appointed Inspector of Armoured Troops for the Nationalist Army, and in this function he advised the high command on the organization and deployment of their tank units. As more trained Spanish personnel became available the number of effectives in Panzergruppe Drohne declined; as early as the beginning of 1938 there were only 100 Germans in the unit, in a single tank company alongside the HQ, anti-tank, transport and workshop elements; and this figure remained stable until the end of the war.

It might be concluded from its tiny size that the unit's role in the Civil War must have been negligible, but this would be an error. In relation to the rest of Western Europe, Spain in 1936 was technologically backward; furthermore, the areas initially under Nationalist control were neither urban nor industrial but rather agricultural, which severely limited the number of technically educated recruits available. Without the expert help of the German unit it would have been extremely difficult for the Nationalist Army to provide technical instruction for the personnel of tank units.

Adding those tanks shipped in as part of Panzergruppe Drohne to those bought directly from Germany by the Nationalists, a total of 122 PzKw Is served in Spain. While the Nationalist Army did not receive any more effective tank type than the PzKw I by direct aid or purchase, the Republican Army was provided with significant numbers of the more



For a brief period after their arrival in 1936, members of Panzergruppe Drohne wore uniforms distinct from those of the rest of the Condor Legion, on which enlisted men's rank bars were worn on the left sleeve rather than on the breast – see Plate C2. (Campesino)

powerful Soviet BT-5 and T-26. If the Republicans had been more adept in their use, they would have gained an important military advantage; but in the event many of these tanks fell into Nationalist hands more or less intact. Panzergruppe Drohne were able to make a number of these serviceable and trained the Nationalists to use them, and the best Nationalist companies were equipped with the T-26.

The Nationalists created a single *Batallón de Carros de Combate* in October 1936. This had an HQ element, two tank companies, an anti-tank company, a transport company and workshops. The incorporation of a German detachment allowed a third tank company to be raised in December 1936. September 1937 saw the arrival of 30 new PzKw Is bought from Germany, and in October a fourth company was formed. That month the unit was retitled as the 1st Tank Bn, with an HQ; transport, AT and workshop companies; and two tank *grupos*:

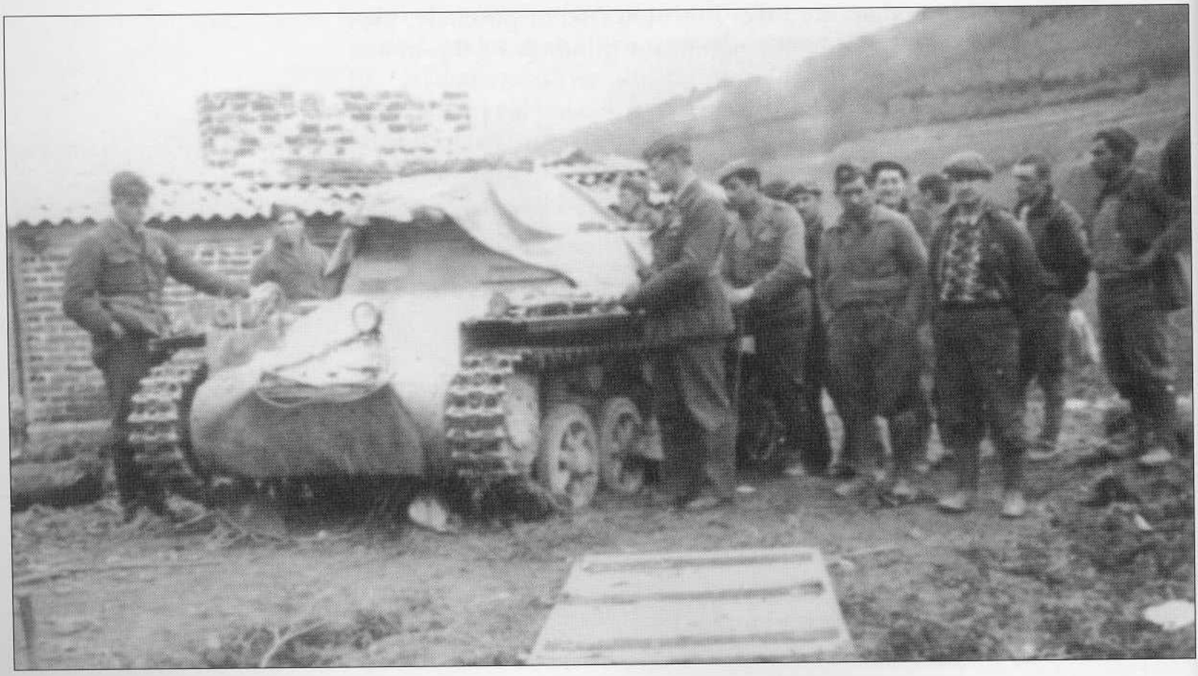
1st Group – 1st & 2nd Cos (PzKw Is), 3rd Co (T-26s)
2nd Group – 4th & 5th Cos (PzKw Is), 6th Co (FT-17s, in process of replacement with T-26s).

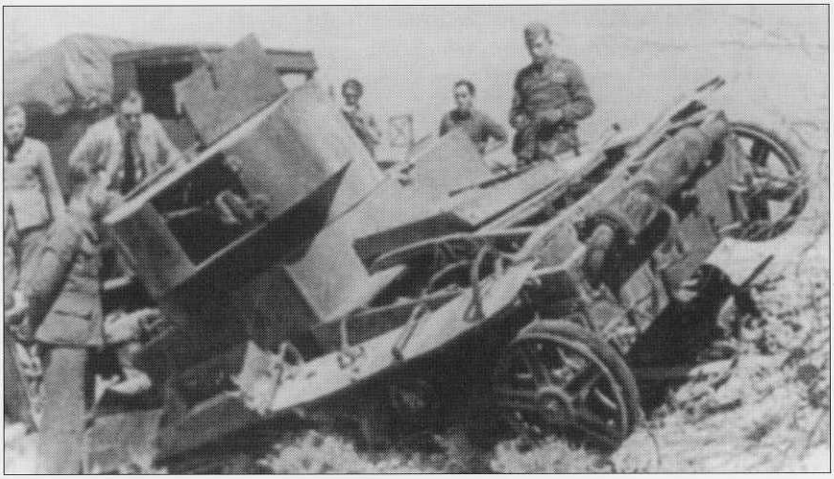
In February 1938 this 1st Tank Bn was re-assigned to the *Tercio* and retitled in its style, as the *Bandera de Carros de Combate de la Legión.* As well as the companies and groups listed above, this incorporated a 'Renault Company' with the FT-17s, and a depot and tank school. In October 1938 the unit was retitled as the *Agrupación de Carros de Combate de la Legión*, and the former *grupos* as its 1st and 2nd Battalions.

In the end, tank battles were not to prove decisive in the Civil War; but the fact that the Republican Army was unable to gain any superiority in this arm despite its technical advantage was largely due to the activities of Panzergruppe Drohne, which created the nucleus of the Nationalist Army armoured forces.

If the Panzer I was no match for the T-26, the Soviet tanks could certainly be neutralized by the German 3.7cm PaK 35/36 anti-tank guns,

Two volunteers in Condor Legion service uniform show their Spanish comrades the basic points of a Panzer I tank; this does not match its Spanish codename of *carro negrillo*, since the dark grey delivery scheme seems to have been completely overpainted with a pale shade – perhaps earth-brown? Note the contrast between the uniformed Germans and the great diversity of garments – many of them clearly civilian – worn by the Spanish soldiers. (FDR)





The Soviet T-26 tank, greatly superior to the PzKw I, was a bitter discovery for the Germans; here a group of them, including a civilian engineer, are inspecting a knocked-out T-26. The two-man PzKw I Ausf B weighed 5.8 tons, mounted two 7.92mm machine guns, and had a maximum armour thickness of 13mm. The three-man T-26 M1933 weighed 9.4 tons; it mounted a 45mm main gun developed from the German 3.7cm AT gun, and was protected by armour up to 25mm thick. (Campesino)

a modest number of which had been issued to Panzergruppe Drohne from its creation; these could penetrate 40mm of armour at 400 yards. Anti-tank guns were typical of the kinds of modern weapons that the Nationalists were short of; Panzergruppe Drohne was responsible for training Spanish personnel in their operation, and the Nationalist Army bought 300 of them. The Republican Army had received even more effective Soviet 45mm AT guns; and again, after a large number of these were captured, Panzergruppe Drohne was charged with training Nationalist personnel with these weapons, as well as with AT guns supplied by the Italians.

Ritter von Thoma's men also trained the Nationalist officers and men in the use of other types of armament. Although Italy was the main supplier of artillery to the Nationalist Army, obsolete 7.7cm pieces had been bought in Germany, as well as flamethrowers. The unit also taught the techniques of anti-gas defence. During its existence, Panzergruppe Drohne directly trained a total of 6,200 Nationalist military personnel, making a very important contribution to improving the technical capabilities of Franco's army.

The experience acquired in Spain by Panzergruppe Drohne and its relevance to future operations by the German Army were not as valuable as in the case of the Luftwaffe; there was no rehearsal in Spain of the ground forces' role in the forthcoming Blitzkrieg. However, the weakness of the Panzer I was soon recognized, and Panzergruppe Drohne made repeated reports on the need for tanks with better armour and armament, which led to the development of better models. On the other hand, the Germans were pleased with the success of the 3.7cm PaK; overconfidence in it would lead to the German Army being equipped with large numbers of this weapon, whose obsolescence would quickly be demonstrated after the outbreak of World War II.

Gruppe Issendorf & Imker-Ausbilder

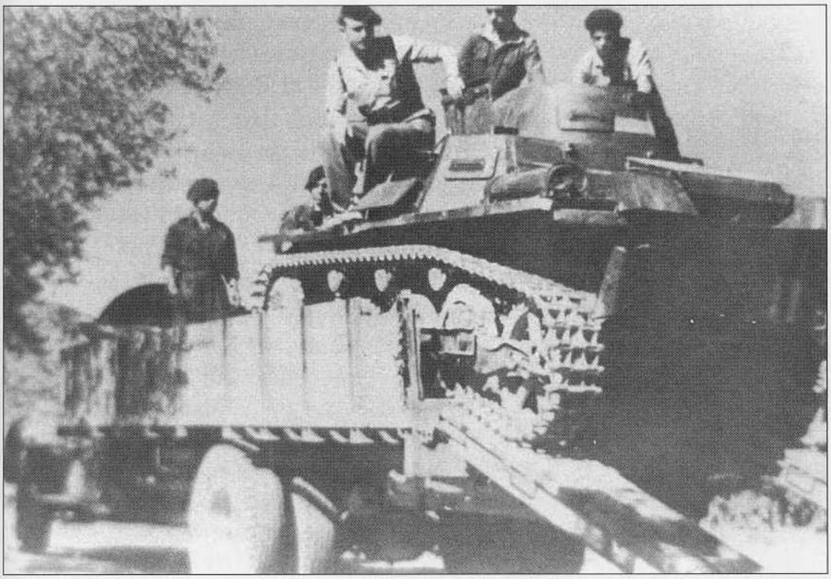
By the end of January 1937 another small group of German military personnel had arrived in Spain, initially known as Gruppe Issendorf after their commander, ObstLt Walter von Issendorf. This group had not been invited by the Nationalist Army but by the Falange, the Fascist party that had supported the Nationalist cause from the beginning and was growing spectacularly, in both members and political influence. The Falangist militia units were fighting at the front alongside the Nationalist Army, despite a natural shortage of suitably qualified officers and NCOs. The original national leader of the Falange, José Antonio Primo de Rivera, had been executed by the Popular Front in November 1936; his replacement, Manuel Hedilla, asked the recently appointed German ambassador to Franco's government to request instructors to provide military training to the militias. These instructors started arriving in January 1937, and in March around 50 German officers were ready to begin work at the Falange's Military Academy.

However, barely a month later the academy was disbanded and Franco had Hedilla arrested. Franco then appointed himself national leader of a new political party, which incorporated both the Falangists and the Carlists (monarchists and ultra-conservatives). Franco did not want the Falange or any other party on the Nationalist side competing with the Army for power, let alone creating their own military commanders. Nevertheless, the German instructors did not return home: there was too pressing a need to train new NCOs and officers for the Nationalist Army.

Before the war the Spanish Army had been small, and since 1931 the left-wing governments had done all they could to reduce it still further. As mentioned above, at the start of the Civil War the Army divided, some in all ranks remaining loyal to the government and others supporting the uprising; and during the first few months of the struggle the left-wing militias executed many officers suspected of favouring the rebels. Once the war had started the Nationalist Army realized that while they needed to organize many new units, very high casualties among serving junior officers were robbing them of the necessary leadership cadres. Franco's army eventually grew to a figure of about one million effectives; it was obviously necessary at the start to improvise cadres by appointing as second lieutenants and NCOs civilians who met certain minimum requirements. Finally, it was decided to regulate this process by creating the duration-only ranks of *alférez provisional* (temporary second lieutenant) and *sargento provisional* (temporary sergeant).

Training courses were established and military academies set up in the different areas under Nationalist control. The staffs of these academies were Spanish officers no longer fit for active service at the front through age or wounds, and as a result they were incapable of instructing recruits in activities which demanded a certain level of

The Nationalist Army captured quite large numbers of repairable T-26s, and the Germans of Panzergruppe Drohne were given the task of instructing the Spanish in their use before they were fielded in Nationalist colours with the 3rd and 6th Companies of the Spanish tank regiment. Note the St Andrew's cross painted on the turret top hatch for identification from the air. (Campesino)



Panzer I of a Spanish unit being driven on to a truck, probably an American GMC ACX-504. The Transport Company of Panzergruppe Drohne had the much larger Vomag DL48 trucks towing SdAh 115 transport trailers. (Steven Zaloga)

physical fitness. The German officers under ObstLt von Issendorf were sent to these academies to work alongside the Spanish staff, and the number of these German instructors increased steadily. They remained on the establishment of the Condor Legion as part of its ground component. As the codename for ground elements was Imker, that for the instructors was Imker-Ausbilder. Just as in the other units of the CL there was a regular rotation of personnel, but on average there were about 150 instructors in Imker-Ausbilder at any one time.

As Imker-Drohne started to need less manpower after sufficient trained Spanish tank troops became available, several dozen of its members joined their comrades in Imker-Ausbilder. Finally, once he had been promoted to full colonel, Ritter von Thoma took command of both Imker-Drohne and Imker-Ausbilder.

The work carried out by the German instructors was outstanding: during its existence Imker-Ausbilder contributed significantly to the instruction of 18,000 temporary second lieutenants and 19,000 temporary sergeants for the infantry. Other teams of Imker-Ausbilder instructors were sent to train specialists at the Chemical Warfare School, and to supervise basic training at the Naval School and the Military Driving School. Groups of specialist officers were also assigned to the Engineer and Signals academies, partly to provide instruction on the equipment Franco had bought from Germany.

Imker-Horch

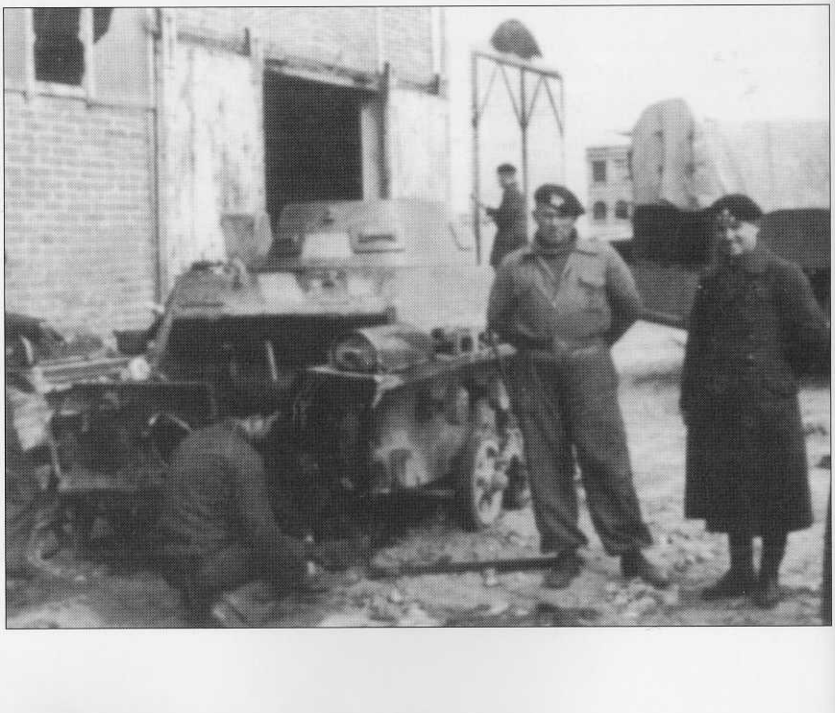
Another and even lesser-known German Army unit forming part of the Condor Legion was Imker-Horch. This was a signals intelligence company – Funk Horch Kompanie. This was a speciality that the Germans had perfected, and that was in fact – along with reconnaissance aircraft – their main source of intelligence-gathering. The activities of this unit during the Civil War were surrounded by such secrecy that even now very little is known about it. It was rarely even referred to as Imker-Horch, the less conspicuous name of Gruppe Wolm being most often used. Organized into platoons, its activities covered all fronts, and throughout the Civil War it provided Franco's general headquarters with precise information on the deployment and intentions of the Republican Army. While approximately 200 Germans served in the unit, they also instructed a certain number of Spanish personnel in these techniques. The importance of these activities to the Nationalist Army is beyond doubt, as can be demonstrated by the following revealing detail. In total, 63 members of the Condor Legion received the Individual Military Medal, Spain's second most important military decoration. Of these only two belonged to the German Army: one was Obst von Thoma, and the other was ObstLt Ernst Hertzer, commander of Imker-Horch.

* * *

Due to the missions carried out by personnel of the German Army serving with the CL, casualties among them were very low in comparison with those suffered by the Luftwaffe: of 28 deaths, only 7 were in action, 14 from accidents and a further 7 from illness.

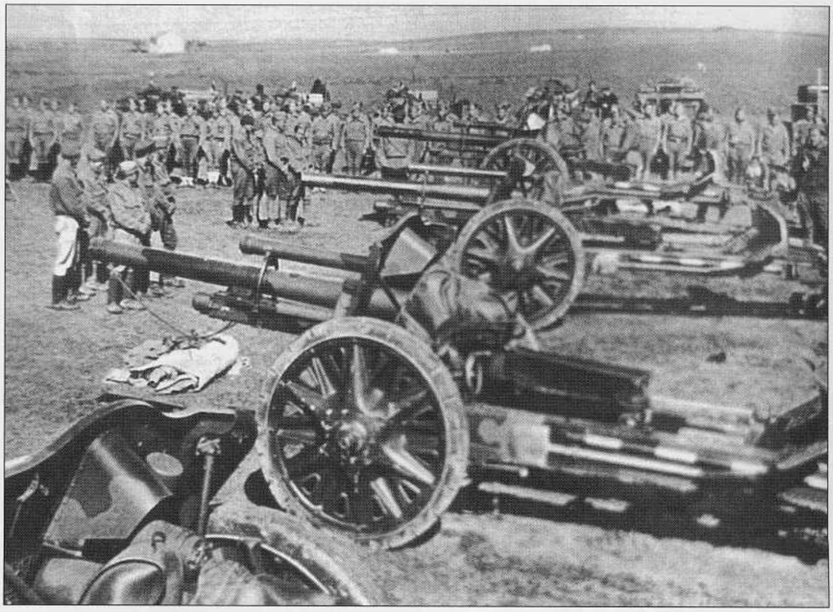
If, in the context of the war in the air, the contribution of the CL is easily comparable to that of the Italian *Aviación Legionaria*, on the ground the situation was completely different. Italy sent tens of thousands of men, forming four, briefly five complete (if small) divisions that took part in the large-scale battles of the war. Many other Italians served as officers and NCOs in mixed Spanish-Italian units (Italian officers, Italian and Spanish NCOs and Spanish soldiers), while an important number of Italians served as instructors at the Nationalist military academies.

It is also interesting to make comparisons with the Russians who served with the Republican Army. Although they were present in fewer numbers than the Italians, many high-ranking Russian officers were at the head of Republican formations, acting as commanders or chiefs-of-staff. The Germans, as we have seen, limited themselves to the role of instructors,



Support units rarely receive the same amount of attention as combat units, despite their decisive role in a modern technical war. Here maintenance personnel of Panzergruppe Drohne's Workshop Company based at Cubas work on a PzKw I badly damaged in the fighting around Madrid in 1937. At right, in greatcoat, is the company commander Oblt Albert Schneider; centre, in overalls over a sweater, is Lt Paul Jaskula. (Campesino)

Nationalist gunners prepare for instruction on the German 10.5cm leFH 18 field howitzer. In the same way that the Germans took partial responsibility for training officers and NCOs for the Nationalist infantry, the Italians collaborated in the training of the artillery; but in 1938 Germany finally sent an Artillery Instruction Group. This consisted of three batteries each with one of the gun types that were to become standard in the German Army: the 15cm field howitzer, 10.5cm field howitzer, and 10.5cm field gun. The artillery instructors, under the command of Obst Lucht, did in fact see combat, although this had never been the intention. (Steven Zaloga)



and the Army's senior officer in Spain, von Thoma, only acted as an adviser to the Nationalist high command on matters related to armoured warfare. However, despite attracting much less attention than the activity of the flying units, the work carried out by Imker-Drohne and Imker-Ausbilder proved very important to the success of the Nationalist Army. It was also to be profitable for the Germans, who recognized from the encounters with the more modern Soviet tanks that there was an urgent need to produce greater numbers of PzKw IIIs and IVs.

Based on reports received from their military detachments in Spain, the Soviet Red Army disbanded their large armoured formations, distributing their tanks among the infantry to provide support. In France, the poor performance of the Panzer Is in Spain gave rise to the belief that their own tanks, much better armed and armoured, could not be beaten by the German tanks, and they too decided to keep them in small units at the service of the infantry. German tankers serving in Spain, beginning with Obst von Thoma, did not arrive at any of these erroneous conclusions, remaining firm in their convictions about the virtues of the concentration of armour to serve the Blitzkrieg doctrine.

GERMAN NAVAL AID

The Kriegsmarine was also present in the Civil War, but its participation generally took place outside the structure of the Condor Legion. It is necessary to distinguish between three different aspects of this participation: the maritime transport of supplies to Nationalist Spain, the patrols carried out along the Spanish coast within the framework of the League of Nations non-intervention agreements, and the presence of a very small Kriegsmarine contingent within the Condor Legion.

Within Sonderstab W, which operated in Germany, the so-called Schifffahrtabteilung (Shipping Detachment) formed from Kriegsmarine personnel organized all the maritime traffic carrying military aid to

Spain. For this end they used civilian merchant ships sailing via the Atlantic, discreetly escorted by the Kriegsmarine. During the Civil War 170 voyages were made to Spain by German ships carrying war matériel.

To understand the other two aspects in which the Kriegsmarine played a role in the Civil War it is necessary to look at the Spanish Navy as it existed in 1936. When the uprising began on 18 July practically all the Navy's ships remained under the control of the Republican government, due to the fact that the petty officers and ratings mutinied against their officers – most of whom were in favour of the uprising – and executed them in large numbers. Those participating in the Nationalist coup were only able to take control of a handful of vessels that were in shipyards undergoing repairs, and were therefore not operational. This situation could have contributed to a quick victory for the Popular Front if the sailors who had taken control of the warships had been able to operate them; but this was not the case. This gave the Nationalists time to organize their own Navy, which proved far more effective than that of the Republicans.

During the months that were necessary to organize the Nationalist Navy, German help – albeit to a much lesser extent than that of Italy – was of great value. The Kriegsmarine deployed its own ships to Spanish waters immediately war began, with the task of evacuating German nationals. Once the Third Reich decided that it was going to provide military aid on a large scale to the Nationalists, the Kriegsmarine received new, more clandestine missions, and to carry them out an important part of the Kriegsmarine was ordered to Spanish waters. In total, 3 'pocket battleships' or super-heavy cruisers (*Deutschland, Admiral Scheer* and *Admiral Graf Spee*), 6 cruisers, 12 torpedo boats and 14 U-boats carried out patrols around the Spanish coast, many of these occurring between the outbreak of war and the end of 1937. These vessels never all operated together at any one time, but were deployed on rotation. These forces were never part of the CL, but came under the Commander of Naval Forces for Spain (Befehlshaber der Seestreitskrafte vor Spanien). However, at the end of the war the crews of these ships received the same decorations as had been instituted for the Condor Legion.

To the initial mission of protecting German interests, and then escorting German ships carrying supplies to the Nationalists, was added from October 1936 the mission of gathering information on maritime traffic heading

The participation of German U-boats in the Civil War has been generally overlooked. In this blurred but important photograph the conning tower of U-36 can be seen. The stripes painted down the front are not, as it might appear, the red/yellow/red of the Nationalist flag, but the German black/white/red. This is more clearly seen in a photo of another Type VIIA boat in Spanish waters, U-35 (KL Werner Lott), which also had a large Kriegsmarine eagle-and-swastika painted across the top of the stripes. (Campesino)

Kriegsmarine vessels patrolling Spanish waters anchored in Nationalist-controlled ports on the mainland and also in Spanish Morocco, where this group of sailors on shore leave are getting to know an Arab boy's *burro*. (FDR)

for ports controlled by the Popular Front – especially ships carrying military supplies. This led to the Kriegsmarine being involved in an undeclared war against the Republicans. As the Nationalist Navy had no submarines, the Germans and Italians decided to support them from November 1936, by sending submarines into Spanish waters to take part in attacks on ships supplying the Popular Front. The German submarines operated in the Atlantic and the Italians in the Mediterranean. Many Italian submarines carried out cruises of this type during the Civil War; but the Atlantic ports were mainly in the hands of the Nationalists, thus offering less chance of action to the German crews. However, during November and December 1936 two German submarines entered the Mediterranean to support their Italian counterparts; and one of them, U-34, sank the Republican Navy submarine C-3 off Malaga by a torpedo attack.

The international body created by the League of Nations to prevent the Civil War from spreading, the so-called Non-Intervention Committee (which included countries that were actually taking an active role in the war – the USSR, Italy and Germany) decided to initiate naval patrols from March 1937 in order to observe compliance. The Soviet Navy decided not to participate, so patrolling of the Spanish coast was left to the navies of France, Britain, Germany and Italy. These last two countries were to patrol the Mediterranean coast controlled by the Republican government, and were thus more easily able to control the traffic of military supplies for the Popular Front.

While carrying out these duties on 29 May 1937, near Ibiza, the pocket battleship *Deutschland* was attacked by two SB-2 bombers of the Republican Air Force flown by Russian crews. Five days beforehand SB-2s had also bombed British, German and Italian ships in Palma harbour, Majorca. Given the protests over that attack, this second incident appeared to be a calculated attempt to provoke Germany into taking reprisals and openly intervening in the war, in order to force other nations to abandon non-intervention and support the Popular Front government. The attack killed 31 German sailors and wounded dozens more. In reprisal, the *Admiral Scheer* bombarded the coastal city of Almeria on 31 May. Germany and Italy withdrew from the League of Nations naval patrol for two weeks; and when they finally rejoined it, two attacks on the cruiser *Leipzig* (15 and 18 June 1937), which caused no damage, nevertheless resulted in both Germany and Italy withdrawing permanently. By then the Nationalist Navy had reached a level of effectiveness that allowed the Kriegsmarine to reduce significantly its presence around the Spanish coast.

As for the German sailors who took part directly in the Civil War, their activity began in August 1936, when three officers and specialists arrived in Spain to advise the Nationalists regarding mines, signals and coastal artillery. Other officers were later sent to the ports earmarked to receive German military aid, in order to supervise unloading operations. With the creation of the Condor Legion the contingent of naval advisers was increased to form Gruppe Nordsee, also known by the codename Gruppe Anker. Numerically this was of little importance – a few dozen men – but it did help the Nationalists in some important ways. This aid generally took the form of gunnery and communications equipment sent by Germany to equip ships of the Nationalist Navy, especially the cruisers *Baleares* and *Canarias*, which had fallen into Nationalist hands before they had been completed. Only a few of these German naval personnel actually embarked in Nationalist ships, though one of them died when the *Baleares* was sunk by Republican destroyers. Another four members of Gruppe Anker died from illness or accident.

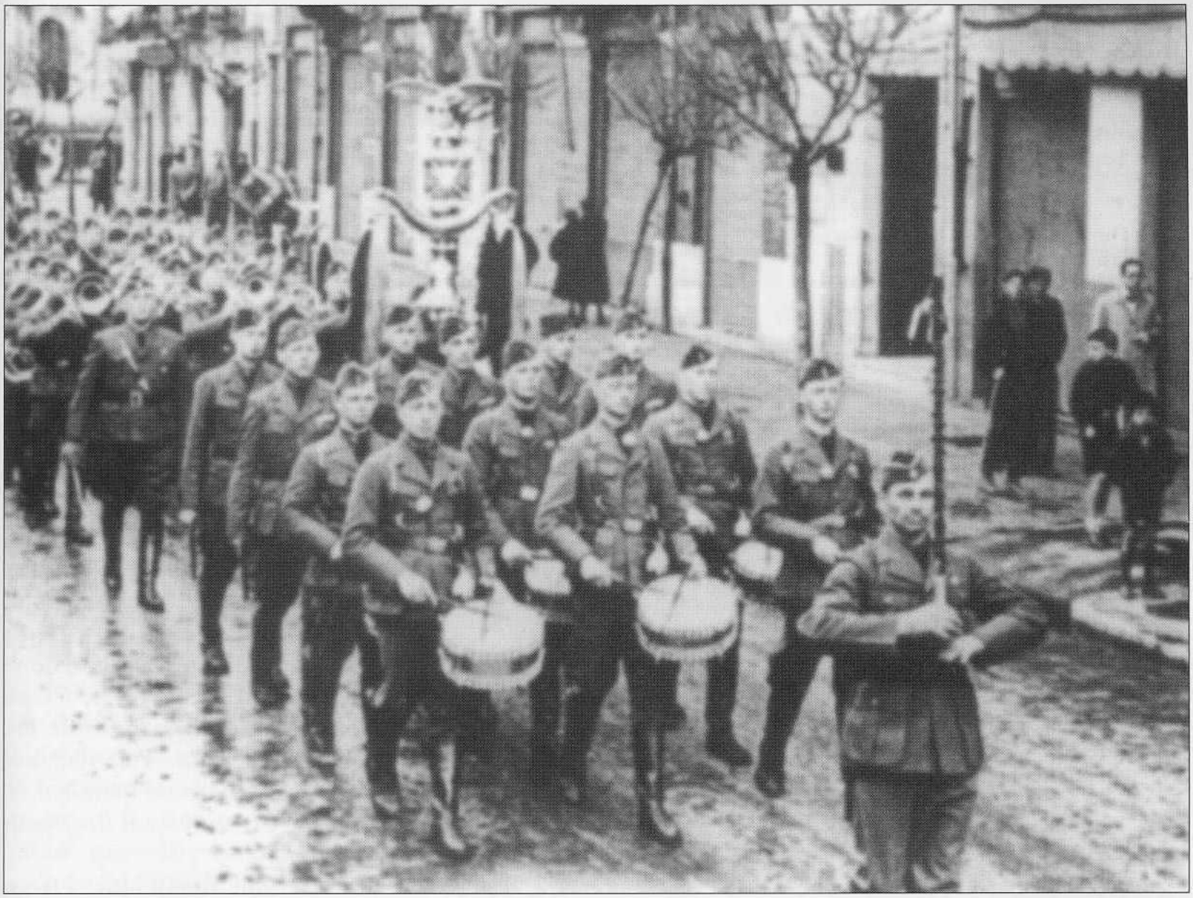
The help given to the Nationalist Navy by the Kriegsmarine was far less important than that given by the Italian *Regia Marina*. Equally, the Kriegsmarine gained far less useful experience than the Luftwaffe or the Heer from its participation in the Civil War. For the German Navy its Spanish intervention was little more than participation in large-scale manoeuvres with live ammunition. Even so, when the CL was repatriated to Germany and publicly honoured, the German sailors who had served in Spanish waters paraded alongside their comrades from the Luftwaffe and the Army.

VICTORY AND ITS AFTERMATH

On 1 April 1939 the Civil War ended in a complete Nationalist victory; and the true German contribution to this victory has been the subject of much debate ever since.

For left-wing historians, German aid to Franco was decisive. Some have even suggested that Germany was involved in the coup of July 1936, although this has been shown to be completely false. In suggesting that Franco was only able to win because of German help such commentators attempt to portray him as Hitler's puppet, so that Franco's regime must share the same universal condemnation that has been visited on Nazi Germany since the end of World War II. Curiously, this emphasis on the CL has led to an under-recognition of the much greater aid given to Franco by Italy, which was in fact far more decisive. As far as pro-Franco historians are concerned, the opposite is naturally the case: they prefer to minimize the German contribution to the Nationalist cause, which also adds to the difficulty of assessing the role played by the Condor Legion.

Today a more objective appreciation is possible. The conclusion is that German aid was important, especially at certain specific moments during the war, but cannot be judged decisive in the final victory of Franco's forces – a claim which can certainly be made for Italian aid.



The Condor Legion Music Corps parading in a Spanish city; note the 'Jingling Johnnie' – see Plate G1. The German volunteers became very popular in the rear areas of Nationalist Spain. (IHCA)

German-Spanish relations

During their time in Spain the Germans generally enjoyed friendly relations with those who supported the Nationalist cause. Historically there had never been any serious conflict between the two countries, and Germany was admired by many in Spain as a culturally and scientifically advanced nation. At first an attempt was made to try to keep the presence of the 'German legionaries' hidden from the Spanish public, but this soon became impossible. The German volunteers had made themselves very popular in the rear areas, and participated in many public acts. In April 1938 the CL even had its own Musikkorps, which gave many concerts in Spanish cities.

The relationship between German and Spanish Nationalist military personnel is another matter. The difference in military traditions was significant, since the Spanish had been greatly influenced by the French Army; and the Latin character of the Spanish contrasted sharply with the Germanic mentality of the members of the Condor Legion. The Spanish soon found that they were able to get along a lot better with the Italian soldiers, sailors and aviators, with whom they shared many common values. However, in spite of these differences in national character there were no serious incidents to speak of between German and Nationalist servicemen. The fact that most of the Germans operated in their own units, independently from the Spanish, prevented any serious tension arising.

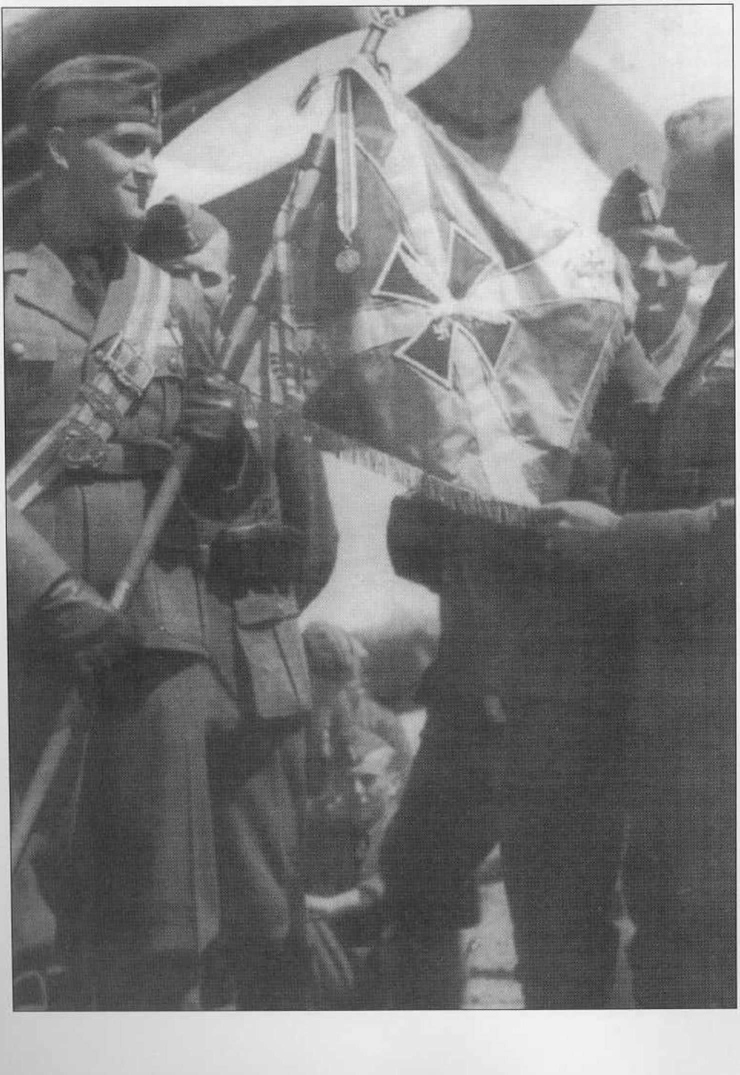
The main area where friction arose was at the High Command level. Traditionally, the Germans placed great emphasis on aggressive campaigns carried out in the shortest possible time. To their eyes, the conduct of operations in the Civil War was desperately slow. The strong German desire to finish their operations in Spain as soon as possible had a lot to do with the unstable situation developing in Central Europe, where the crises with Austria and the Sudetenland were threatening to cause a general conflict. The Wehrmacht needed to concentrate all its assets back home within the national territory. This tension even led to talk of withdrawing the CL to Germany even though the Civil War had not finished, and during this period of crisis early in 1938 practically all military supplies to the CL were frozen.

Parades and decorations

Once the Civil War had ended the CL took part in many public ceremonies both in Spain and Germany. On 12 May 1939, at Barajas airport (Madrid), there was an enormous parade involving aircraft and personnel from the Spanish Nationalist Air Force as well as the so-called allied air forces. During this parade both the Italian and German airmen were decorated en masse with Spanish awards. On the same date, Gen Franco presented to the CL an Honour Standard in gratitude for its services in Spain. This flag was carried in the several parades in which the CL took part in Spain and Germany.

A week later, on 19 May, a large contingent from the CL took part in the Victory Parade through the centre of Madrid. Following these ceremonies in Madrid the majority of the German personnel went to the city of León, which had been the CL's main logistic base; and on 22 May there was a huge parade to mark the official farewell of the Condor Legion. Four days later the transport ships repatriating the CL left the port of Vigo for Hamburg.

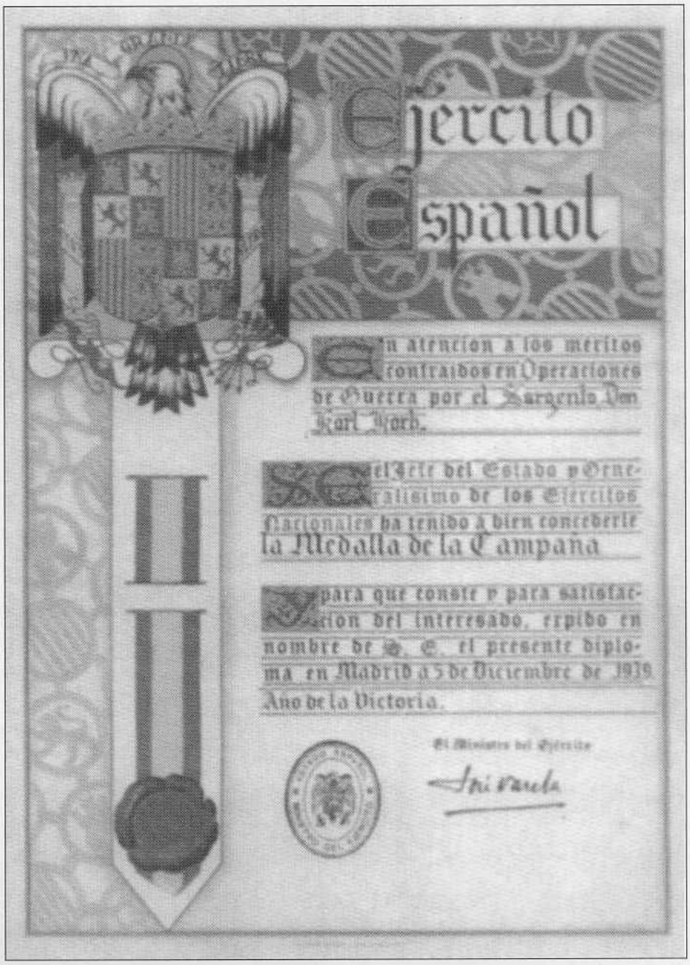
In Germany itself, the public had been kept in the dark regarding their country's participation in the Spanish Civil War, at least while the war was in progress; but no sooner had it finished than Germany's role became publicly known. A spectacular reception was held in Hamburg for the returning legionaries, and the men had hardly set foot on German soil before it became known that a special



The Honour Standard presented to the CL at the end of the war incorporated both Spanish and German elements in its design – see Plate G4. In accordance with Spanish tradition, Collective Military Medals awarded to members of a unit were attached to the unit flag; the medal in the photograph is that presented to the pilots who took part in the summer 1936 airlift that transported units of the Army of Africa to Spain. (Campesino)

decoration was to be awarded to all those Germans who had served in Spain: the Spanienkreuz (Spanish Cross). The personnel arriving home were transferred from Hamburg to the Döberitz training area, and were joined there by all those who had already served with the CL and had returned to Germany prior to that date. On 5 June the Spanish Cross was presented *en masse*, and on the following day Hitler presided over a massive parade involving 14,000 men – not only members of the CL, but also the crews of the Kriegsmarine vessels that had been on patrol in Spanish waters.

Many Spanish decorations (see Plate H) were awarded to personnel of the CL, and although no member received Spain's highest award – the *Cruz Laureada de San Fernando* (Laurel Cross of St Ferdinand) – the second highest, the *Medalla Militar Individual* (MMI), or Individual Military Medal, was awarded to 63 Germans. As the MMI is essentially an award for bravery in action, German pilots were the majority among the recipients; 31 were awarded to pilots of K88, 14 to pilots of J88, ten to those of A88, and another to a pilot of AS88. The only MMI awarded to F88 was for the unit's longest-serving commander (Hermann Lichtemberger), and in the case of S88, the last serving chief-of-staff (Hans Seideman). The members of Army units forming part of the CL, who had mainly served as instructors, received only two MMIs, as already mentioned. The three successive commanders of the CL – Gens Sperrle, Volkmann and von Richthofen – had the honour of receiving a special version of the *Medalla Militar Individual* adorned with diamonds; this was something completely outside the Spanish tradition, and must be considered a concession to German taste.



Ejercito
Español

En atencion a los meritos contraidos en Operaciones de Guerra por el Sargento Don Karl Korb.

S. E. el Jefe del Estado y Generalisimo de los Ejercitos Nacionales ha tenido á bien concederle la Medalla de la Campaña

Y para que conste y para satisfacion del interesado, expido en nombre de S. E. el presente diploma en Madrid a 5 de Diciembre de 1939 Año de la Victoria.

El Ministro del Ejercito

An example of the elaborate certificates that accompanied the award of Spanish decorations to members of the Condor Legion. This one honours 'Sargento Don Karl Korb' with the Campaign Medal, and is dated 5 December 1939. (Campesino)

The Military Medal is also conferred on groups of soldiers – sometimes entire units – and this version is known as the *Medalla Militar Colectiva* (Collective Military Medal). This was awarded to those pilots who had taken part in the 'air bridge' bringing troops of the Moroccan garrison to the mainland.

The next decoration in order of importance awarded to members of the CL was the *Cruz de Guerra* (War Cross).[4] This decoration had been abolished by the Republic because it was commonly known as the *Cruz de María Cristina*, after a former Queen of Spain. The Nationalist Army

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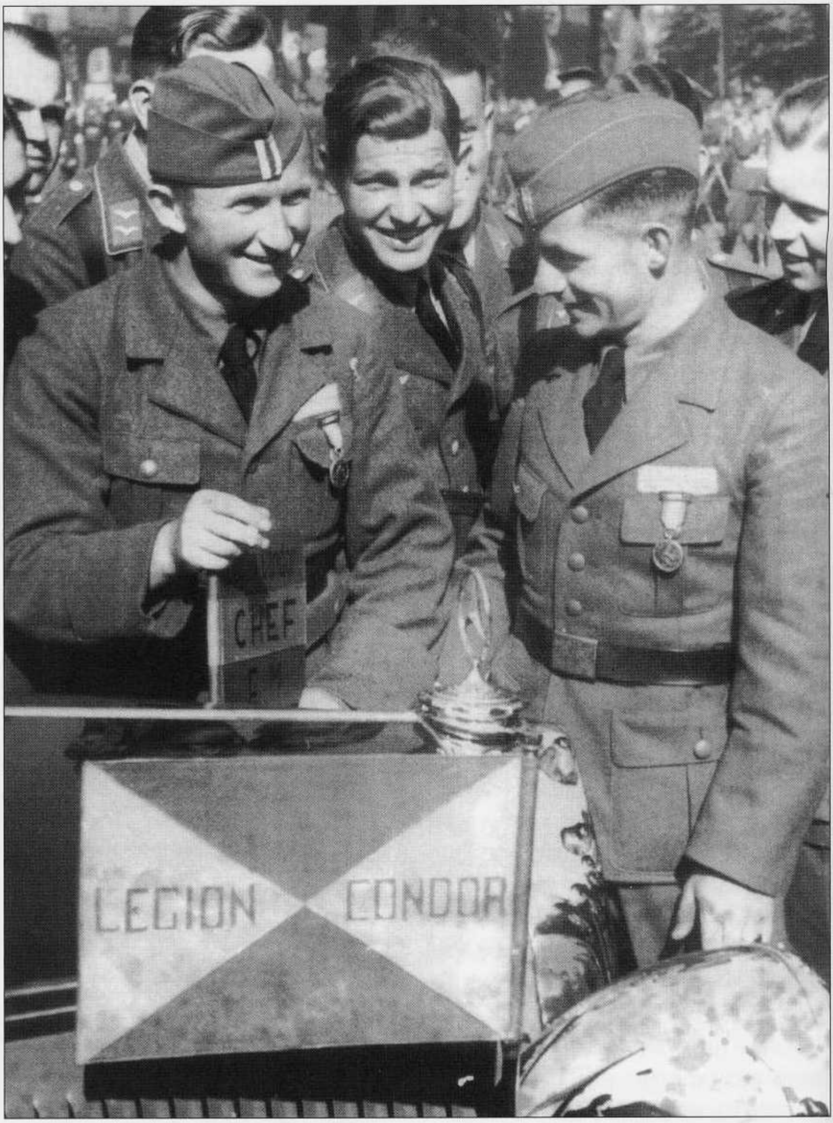
[4] The *Cruz de Guerra con Palmas* (War Cross with Palms) was instituted in 1942, ranking below the MMI but higher than the *Cruz de Guerra*. It was not awarded retrospectively to members of the Condor Legion.

Now back in Germany, the brown-uniformed veterans are an object of curiosity for their Luftwaffe comrades. The decoration worn by these two NCOs is the Campaign Medal. Note the command flags on the wings of this Mercedes staff car, and see Plate G6. (Campesino)



reintroduced it for the Civil War, and for this reason it is often referred to as the *Cruz de Guerra 1936–1939*; it was conferred on perhaps 1,000 German personnel. An even greater number of the *Cruz Roja del Mérito Militar* (Red Cross for Military Merit), usually called simply the *Cruz Roja* by the Spanish, were awarded; more than 5,500 Germans received it.

These three decorations were normally awarded for bravery or for outstanding command of military units. The German (and Italian) volunteers were awarded them in much larger numbers, proportionally, than were given to Spanish servicemen. It must be remembered, however, that a great many of these medals were given out just after the war had ended in victory, in an atmosphere of euphoria, as well as being a way of expressing gratitude to those foreign volunteers who had come to Spain and risked themselves in the Nationalist cause.

Another award given out *en masse*, but this time with complete justification, was the *Medalla de la Campaña 1936–1939* (1936–1939 Campaign Medal), as this was awarded to all those who had served with the Nationalist armed forces during the war. The number of these given to Germans – almost 15,000 – is a very good indication of the actual number of Germans who served in the Condor Legion. Those personnel of the CL who were not decorated for their behaviour in combat but who had given outstanding service in other areas (e.g. as instructors) received the *Cruz del Mérito Militar con distintivo blanco* (Military Merit Cross with White Badge), usually called the *Cruz Blanca* by the Spanish. This decoration was conferred in different classes according to military rank, and 1,300 were awarded to Germans. Members of the CL who were wounded in action or injured while on active service, or those who had been taken prisoner, had the right to the *Medalla de Sufrimientos por la Patria* (Medal for Suffering in the Service of the Fatherland); 206 Germans received this medal.

Apart from the numerous Spanish decorations, the Third Reich instituted German awards specifically for those who had taken part in the Civil War. The Spanish Cross, created on 14 April 1939 very shortly after the end of the war, was awarded in two versions, with or without Swords (see Plate H1 & H2). All members of the CL had the right to the first, as well as the crews of those Kriegsmarine vessels which had been involved in combat during service in Spanish waters. It was conferred in three categories, according to merit, and in large numbers: 8,462 in bronze (the lowest ranking category), 8,304 in silver and 1,126 in gold. On 6 June 1939 another version was created within the highest class of this award, the Spanish Gold Cross with Swords and Diamonds. This select version was awarded to only 27 members of the Condor Legion.

The Spanish Cross without Swords existed in only two classes – bronze and silver – and was awarded to military and civilian personnel whose contribution was considered to have been of less importance. These included, for example, those Kriegsmarine crews who had not completed three months' service in Spanish waters, the crews of the mail flights between Germany and Spain, civilian workers from German aircraft factories who had moved to Spain, and so forth. In June 1939, during the homecoming ceremonies for the CL, 7,869 bronze and 327 silver crosses without swords were awarded. In 1942 the number of people eligible to receive this decoration was increased, when it was decided to include retrospectively those members of Kriegsmarine crews who had escorted German merchant ships heading for Spain, as well as the civilian crews of the merchant ships themselves.

The Spanish Cross had, in effect, a double function. On the one hand it was a campaign medal, conferred on almost all Germans, both civilian and military, who had in some way been involved in the war in Spain. A total of 26,000 were awarded in June 1939. Given its two distinct categories, it was also a decoration to reward specific acts of merit and valour. It is curious that while the highest Spanish decoration awarded to Germans, the Medalla Militar Individual, was conferred on 63 occasions, the highest German decoration for members of the CL, the *Spanienkreuz* mit Schwertern im Gold mit Brillanten, was only conferred in 27 cases. In total, 15 people received both of these awards, including the three commanders-in-chief of the CL and a few of the most celebrated pilots (such as Adolf Galland). Other pilots who were destined to become famous, such as Werner Mölders, did not receive the MMI, but were given the Spanish Gold Cross with Swords and Diamonds.

Even after they had rejoined their respective Luftwaffe units, Condor Legion veterans were the subjects of numerous ceremonies honouring their service. These sun-tanned officers and senior NCOs are wearing both Spanish and German decorations. (Campesino)

Those members of the CL who had suffered injuries during their service in Spain were awarded a decoration created especially for them, the Verwundeten Abzeichen für deutsche Freiwillige im Spanischen Freiheitskampf (Wound Badge for German Volunteers in the Spanish War of Freedom), instituted at the end of May 1939. Resembling the German Army award of World War I but with an added swastika motif, this was conferred in black (for one or two wounds – see Plate H3) on 182 servicemen, and just once in silver (for three or more wounds). In July 1939 the German High Command officially recognized the award that Ritter von Thoma had instituted in 1936 for personnel of his Panzergruppe; this Panzertruppenabzeichen der Legion Condor (Tank Badge of the Condor Legion – see Plate H4) was awarded on 415 occasions.

It was also decided to institute a decoration, similar in design to the Spanish Cross, for relatives of those members of the CL who had fallen in Spain, the Ehrenkreuz für Hinterbliebene deutscher Spanienkämpfer (Honour Cross for the Bereaved of German Fighters in Spain), 315 of which were awarded.

Finally, we should point out that the German Army as well as the Luftwaffe designed commemorative cuff bands for Condor Legion service that were displayed on regular uniforms during World War II (see Plate H9 & H10).

* * *

Between 1935 and 1939 the German armed forces carried out several military operations outside the borders of the Reich, but none of these involved combat: the Rhineland remilitarization, the annexations of Austria and the Sudetenland, and the occupation of the rest of Czechoslovakia. Only the veterans from Spain had taken part in real fighting, and from April until September 1939 they were the undisputed heroes of the Third Reich.

Nationalist Spain remained very grateful to Germany, but not to the extent that a puppet pro-German government was going to be installed in Madrid. During World War II Franco skilfully manipulated his relationship with Germany, never entering the war on the German side. Spain's contribution to the Axis war effort was limited to the sending of volunteers (the División Azul or Blue Division) when the Wehrmacht attacked Russia.[5] This deployment was carried out in the name of the fight against Communism – the same cause that had been proclaimed to justify the very existence of the Condor Legion.

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[5] See MAA 103, *Germany's Spanish Volunteers*

THE PLATES

A: LUFTWAFFE

A1: Bomber crewman, *Kampfgruppe 88*, 1937–39

This member of a Heinkel He 111 crew wears standard items of Luftwaffe flying clothing: a summer LKp S 101 flying helmet of tan cloth, with black-varnished aluminium earphone covers, and a summer K So/34 one-piece flying suit with the zipped thigh pockets introduced in May 1937. In the warmth of the Spanish summer he wears only laced shoes rather than flying boots. No rank insignia are worn, but the use of a semi-automatic pistol might suggest an officer.

A2: *Leutnant* fighter pilot, *Jagdgruppe 88*

The silver-piped flap of the CL's khaki-brown fieldcap identifies an officer; and the two silver six-point stars set on yellow cloth and pinned to the cap and the left breast, the up-graded Spanish rank of *teniente* (first lieutenant). The privately purchased light brown leather flying jacket has plain shoulder straps of the same material; above his right breast pocket he displays the *Aviación Legionaria* pilot's badge in embroidered form. The straight trousers of service uniform are tucked into German lined flying boots in black suede and leather; and his outfit is completed by a brown field belt with, in this case, a cross strap to support the weight of the pistol.

A3: Bomber crewman, *Kampfgruppe 88*

Against the winter cold he wears an early one-piece flying suit for winter operations over land, the KW I/33 or 'Bavarian' model, which was made in either dark grey or brown heavy fabric with dark fleece lining and collar; the LKp W 101 helmet is also lined with sheepskin, as are the flying boots.[6]

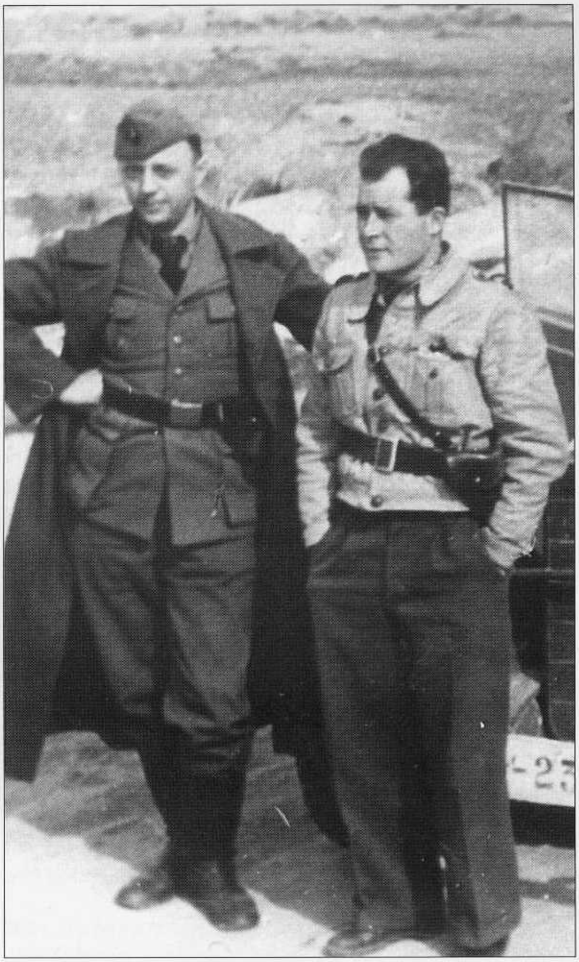
A4: *Aviación Legionaria* pilot's wings

The crossed halberd, arquebus and crossbow of the *Legión Extranjera – 'El Tercio'* – is superimposed on the winged disc.

B: LUFTWAFFE

B1: *Unteroffizier, Luftnachriten Abteilung (mot) 88*

This NCO of the Luftwaffe signals unit wears the full Condor Legion service uniform, cut in Luftwaffe style in khaki-brown woollen cloth. Note the four pleated patch pockets with squared flaps, the lack of shoulder straps, French cuffs, and pebbled grey metal buttons; photographs show minor variations in such details. The two rank bars of a Spanish *brigada* are worn on the cap and left breast in gold on a backing of branch-of-service colour, here the brown of signals troops. His speciality is shown by the Nationalist flying badge on his right breast, with crossed lightning bolts superimposed on the red disc. By Spanish regulations this was only displayed by aircrew, but on some occasions it was also worn by Ln88 personnel to underline their Luftwaffe rather than Army identity. His straight trousers and marching boots are the standard CL legwear. The belt supporting a P08 in a hard-shell holster has a plain aluminium buckle plate. The MP 28II sub-machine gun is a local acquisition; although German-designed it was not a Wehrmacht-issue weapon, but was manufactured in Belgium for worldwide export.



The man on the left is an interpreter; under magnification his cap badge of a white 'i' on a black oval can be seen. He wears entirely regulation uniform with a greatcoat, and note that he is armed with a pistol. Beside him, a pilot wears a privately acquired short, pale-coloured jacket – compare with Plate A2. (Arraéz)

B2: *Leutnant* Graf von Hoyos

This officer arrived in Spain among the first German pilots early in August 1936; and on the night of 12/13 August, flying Junkers Ju 52/3ms in bomber configuration, he and Freiherr von Moreau put the Republican battleship *Jaime I* out of action in Malaga harbour with two direct hits from 1,500 feet. His uniform is as improvised as his bomber, but by the time this photo was taken the fieldcap and breeches were standard issue. He wears the rank stars of *teniente* on a 'biscuit' of the yellow Waffenfarbe of the flying branch, sewn to the left breast of a light khaki shirt. An improvised open-top holster secures the P08 pistol to his Spanish belt.

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[6] For detailed material on German flying clothing see MAA 377, *Luftwaffe Air and Ground Crew 1939–45*

B3: *Oberleutnant* Werner Mölders, 3./J88, summer 1938

The Staffelkapitän of J88's 3.Staffel, and the Condor Legion's leading fighter ace, Mölders wears a Spanish-made service dress with unpleated pockets, two-point pocket flaps, Polish cuffs and brown composition buttons; although such locally made tunics also varied in details, all had shoulder straps. The rank piping on the cap and the stars of a Spanish *capitán* on yellow backing are conventional, and 1938-pattern Spanish pilot's wings are embroidered on a patch on his right breast. The straight slacks are cut to the full dimensions typical of 1930s civilian fashion.

B4: 1938-pattern Spanish Nationalist pilot's wings

When it was created the insignia consisted of silver wings with a royal crown, and a red disc bearing in gold the different aircrew qualification badges, including a four-bladed propeller for pilots. The Republic abolished the crown; and when the Civil War broke out it substituted a red star above the disc. In 1938 the Nationalist Air Force returned to the traditional design, with two changes: the crown was now of imperial style, and the black eagle of St John was added to the red disc behind the speciality badges. In fact, photos show a wide variety of wings worn both before and after 1938; they were locally manufactured, and often hand-embroidered. Many CL veterans continued to display these insignia on their Luftwaffe uniforms during World War II, though not in this position on the breast.

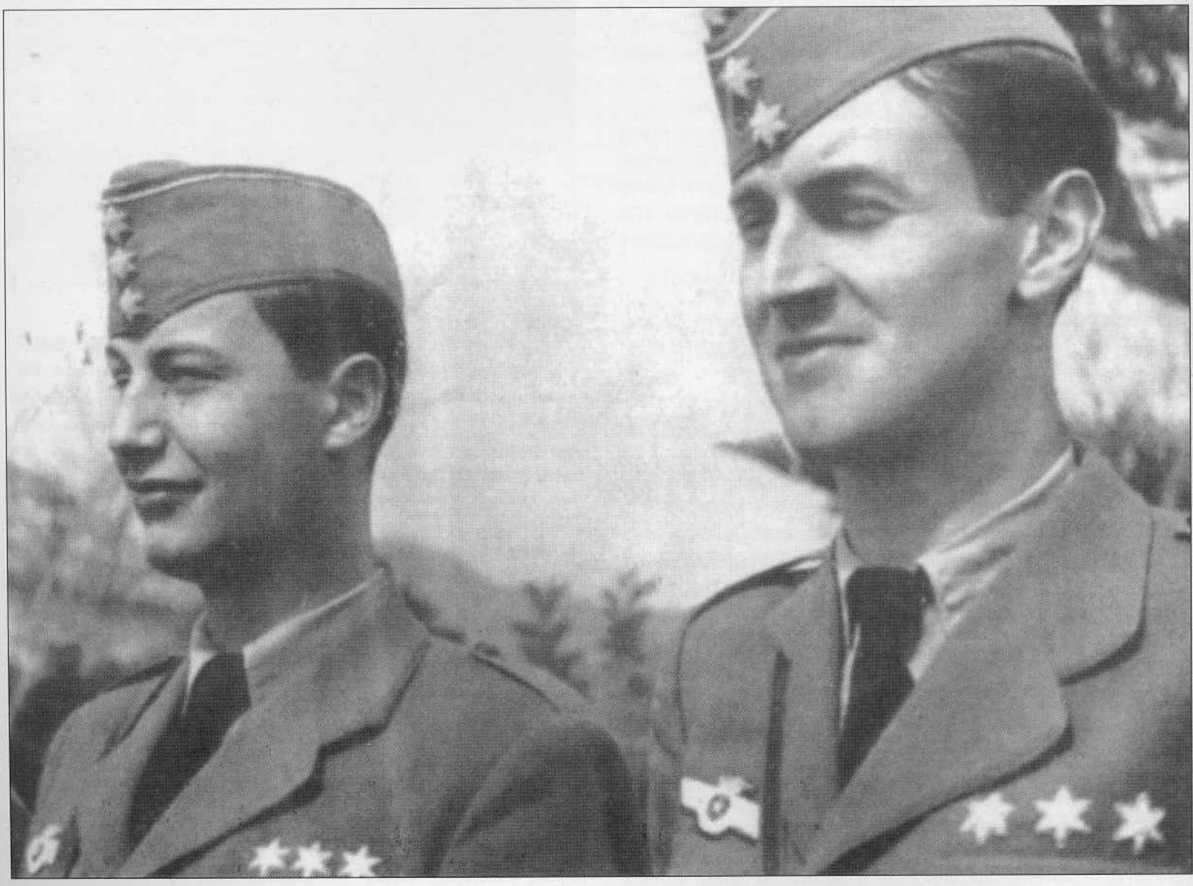
C: PANZERGRUPPE DROHNE, OCTOBER 1936

C1: *Legionär*, working dress

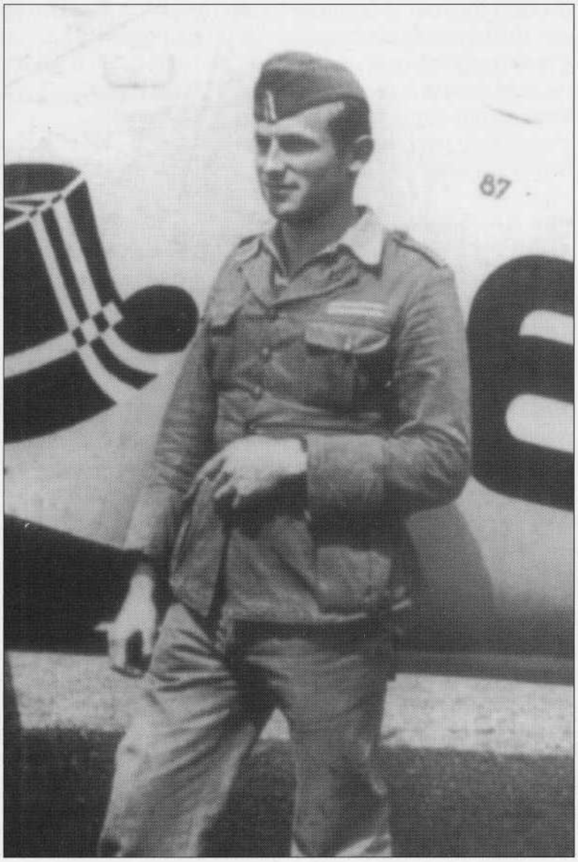
This happy German wears the one-piece Spanish overalls issued for work and training immediately after arrival in Spain. The colour could vary widely, from dark blue through blue-grey or green-grey to brown or light tan. A local black beret and a civilian belt complete the ensemble.

C2: *Legionär*, walking-out dress

This entirely Spanish-made outfit was also issued for 'best' uniform. It consists of the same black beret, worn with a four-pocket medium brown tunic with French cuffs, broad shoulder straps and brown composition buttons; the collar of the light khaki shirt is worn folded open outside the tunic, in the style of the *Tercio*. The single gold stripe on the left sleeve, here on Panzer-pink backing, is the rank insignia of an ordinary legionary, equivalent to that of the Spanish *cabo*



Two Oberleutnant pilots, wearing the Spanish rank of captain. The pilot's wings are the crowned 1938 version – see Plate B4. The caps were undoubtedly made by a Spanish tailor: note that the lines of officer's silver piping are set on just below the edge of the flap rather than along it, and that the left-hand cap has a far deeper flap than normal, to accommodate the three stars. (Álvaro)



An Unteroffizier of J88 nicely posed in front of a Bf 109 of 2.Staffel. His clothing is standard issue, but it has acquired a distinctly Spanish appearance from the wearing of the shirt collar wide open and folded over the tunic, in the manner of the *Tercio*. (Arráez)

primero. The light brown belt has a cross strap and a plain brass buckle plate; and note the motorcyclist-style boots. This uniform had been replaced with one of more German style by December 1936, with the rank stripe moving to the left breast.

C3: *Legionär*, winter sentry duty

This young soldier standing guard over the tents where his comrades sleep wears well-used overalls, here in tan cloth, and the usual beret. The double-breasted, three-quarter length brown wool topcoat is also of Spanish manufacture, with shoulder straps, French cuffs and composition buttons. With his German P08 pistol and Mauser rifle he is using a Spanish Army cartridge pouch, originally for the M1893 Spanish Mauser. The strap tab of his field torch (flashlight) is buttoned to his coat.

Background: The tactical marking painted on the PzKw I tank dates from 1937 onwards. The Nationalist 1a Batallón de Carros used a halved disc of white over a second colour denoting the company – respectively red, yellow, and all-white for 3rd Company. When a second unit was formed it used a diamond shape divided in the same colours. Flashes in the colours of the Nationalist flag – red/yellow/red – were painted in various positions; white vehicle numbers were painted on the front and rear of the hulls; and after the tank units were handed over to the Spanish Foreign Legion in February 1938 the *Tercio's* halberd, arquebus and crossbow badge was added in white, usually beside or opposite the company sign.

D: PANZERGRUPPE DROHNE, 1937–38

D1: *Oberstleutnant* Wilhelm Ritter von Thoma

The commander of the Condor Legion armoured component at first wore the same one-piece overalls as his men, but here he wears the definitive uniform of his unit. The black beret has been ornamented with the silver death's-head of the German Panzerwaffe, above a swastika. The German-made tunic is of Luftwaffe cut, and is worn with paler khaki-brown breeches, rather old-fashioned puttees and laced boots. Above the left pocket the three gold eight-point stars of *coronel* are pinned on a *galleta* in Panzer-pink Waffenfarbe. Below it is the silver tank badge ordered by Ritter von Thoma for his men soon after arriving in Spain. The apparently Spanish belt seems to have a silvered tank silhouette on the brass buckle plate – perhaps a unique personal affectation?

D2: *Leutnant* Hans Hannibald von Mörner, 2.*Panzerkompanie*

The use of various different styles of beards was tolerated, and not uncommon among the Panzergruppe personnel; this may have come about through their close co-operation with the *Tercio*, where facial hair was a tradition. This heavily whiskered platoon commander wears a non-regulation short leather jacket – a type of garment popular among junior officers on both sides in the Civil War; note the four flapped and buttoned pockets on this double-breasted example.

D3: *Unteroffizier*, working dress

The definitive look for the German tank instructors, though note earlier remarks on different colours of overalls. This NCO wears the bars of a *brigada* and the CL tank badge on a pale tan overall, worn over the shirt and service trousers and a civilian sweater. The holstered P08, belt and plain buckle are German.

E: INSTRUCTORS

E1: NCO, *Flak-Artillerie*

Loading an 8.8cm shell into the breech of a Flak 18, this man wears standard shirt, trousers and boots but with the *chambergo* summer hat, a style imported from Spanish Morocco. Note the heavy protective glove on the hand which pushes the shell home into the breech.

E2: *Oberleutnant*, Toledo Infantry Academy

This company commander at the Toledo Infantry Academy, wearing full service dress with breeches and riding boots, is identified as an instructor transferred from Panzergruppe Drohne by his black beret and the CL tank badge on his left pocket. As usual, his Spanish rank insignia are up-graded by one step to the three stars of *capitán*.

E3: *Major* Erich Grosse, San Fernando Naval School

In January 1938 this German Army infantry officer was appointed to take over basic training at this school, with the rank of *teniente-coronel*; his two gold eight-point stars are displayed on a *galleta* in the white Waffenfarbe of the infantry. He chooses to wear a white shirt replacing the regulation khaki.

E4: M1935 steel helmet

The Condor Legion was issued with the newly introduced M1935, painted a medium brown shade and without decal insignia. It is often seen in use in photos of the light Flak crews, but not of other units.

F: COMMANDERS-IN-CHIEF

F1: *Generalmajor* Hugo Sperrle, summer 1937

The first commander of the Condor Legion favoured this light khaki uniform without insignia, sometimes with straight, loosely cut civilian-style trousers. He seems always to have used this Spanish Army officer's peaked (visored) cap in khaki cloth with gold piping – note the quarter-piping on the underside of the crown – and a composition peak. The insignia were unique: the Spanish major-general's badge on the crown (a four-point star on a crossed baton and sword), and on the band a gold Luftwaffe eagle-and-swastika of the early pattern, with down-turned tail.

F2: *Generalmajor* Hellmuth Volkmann, 1938

The commander of the CL between October 1937 and October 1938 wears the same *general de brigada* rank badge on his gold-piped *Fliegermütze*. His Spanish tunic is of *sahariana* style, with a chest yoke incorporating the pocket flaps, an integral cloth belt, buttoned cuffs, and plain doubled shoulder straps fixed through loops. He displays the pre-1938 Spanish pilot's badge on his right breast, opposite a rank badge on a square patch in the black of Stab 88. On his right pocket is the badge of the Navarre Army Corps – a small round-bottomed shield in red, bordered by a gold chain, and with four gold chains crossing it vertically, horizontally and diagonally.

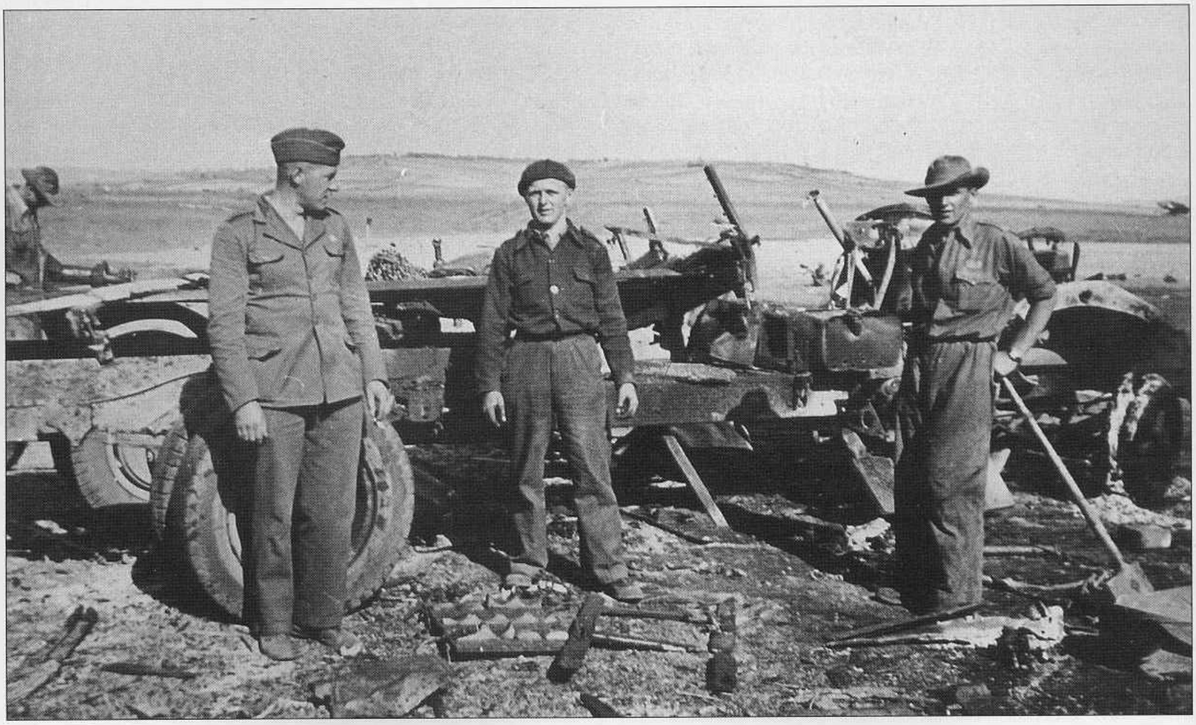
F3: *Generalmajor* Wolfram von Richthofen, 1939

The former chief-of-staff, who succeeded to command of the CL in October 1938, was photographed at the end of the Civil War wearing a Spanish general's field cap trimmed with broad gold braid. The insignia resemble those worn by Gen Sperrle; the Spanish *general de brigada's* rank badge, above a gold Luftwaffe eagle, but in this case with the swastika removed. The rank badge is repeated on both cuffs of the Spanish-made tunic. On his right breast is the crowned 1938 Spanish pilot's badge, and on his left that of the Italian *Regia Aeronautica*; for this parade he displays the Spanish Individual Military Medal from his lapel, above the 1936–39 Campaign Medal.

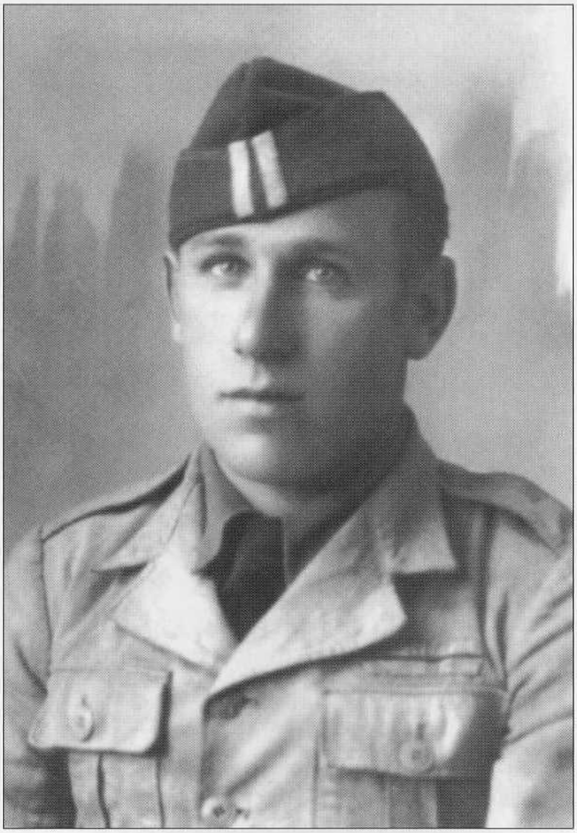
G: CEREMONIAL, APRIL–MAY 1939

G1: *Schellenbaum*, Condor Legion Music Corps

The traditional 'Jingling Johnnie' of German military bands traces its origins to Ottoman Turkish standards captured by the Austrians in the 16th century. The Condor Legion's example was of highly polished brass and 'German silver' with hanging bells and stars, and long horsehair tassels in



In practice, working uniforms were often modified or replaced for comfort or other reasons, at personal choice. These three members of Panzergruppe Drohne are each dressed differently, only the left-hand man is in regulation uniform. (Arráez)



Privately purchased service uniform items were also worn, by NCOs as well as officers. This Unteroffizier's tunic has been made up from a lighter material than the standard issue service tunic, and has civilian-style plastic or composition buttons rather than the metal type found on most military uniforms of the period. (Campesino)

the Spanish colours of red and yellow. The obverse of the banner bore the Spanish national arms.

G2: Reverse of *Schellenbaum* banner

The central cypher in gold is 'LC' for Legion Condor; on the pale blue cross is the motto of the Spanish armed forces, *Todo por la Patria* – 'Everything for the Fatherland'.

G3: *Unteroffizier* standard-bearer

The Honour Standard presented by Gen Franco is carried by an Unteroffizier wearing a brand new uniform, complete with belt and Luftwaffe Y-straps. He displays the 1936–39 Campaign Medal just awarded. The standard and its bandolier are in the Spanish national colours, and the reverse of the flag bears the national coat of arms. A Collective Military Medal is attached – see photo, page 54.

G4: Obverse of Condor Legion standard

A mixture of Spanish and German imagery, including the Luftwaffe's silver eagle-and-swastika, 'L.C.', the Spanish national arms, and a black yoke-and-arrows – the badge of the Falange.

G5: Vehicle licence plate

This design was used on soft-skin vehicles by the Panzergruppe Drohne.

G6: Car banner, Condor Legion chief-of-staff

'EM' stands for Estado Mayor, the Spanish for General Staff.

H: AWARDS

(These images are not to a constant scale.)

H1: The *Spanienkreuz mit Schwerten*, awarded in three grades (bronze, silver and gold) for combat service.

H2: The Spanish Cross without Swords, awarded in two grades (bronze and silver) to non-combatants.

H3: The *Verwundetenabzeichen* or Wound Badge, awarded in two grades (black, and – in one case only – silver).

H4: The *Panzertruppenabzeichen der Legion Condor*, established for his tank troops by ObstLt von Thoma in November 1936. A handful of copies were made in gold finish to individual order.

H5: Spanish *Medalla Militar Individual.*

H6: Spanish *Cruz de Guerra.*

H7: Spanish *Medalla de la Campaña 1936–39.*

H8: Spanish *Cruz Roja al Mérito Militar.*

H9: German Army commemorative cuff title, permitted to be worn on Wehrmacht uniforms by Condor Legion veterans serving with the Panzer Lehrregiment and the Nachriten Lehrabteilung only.

H10: Cuff title worn on Luftwaffe uniforms; it is normally associated with Kampfgeschwader 53, which bore the honour title 'Legion Condor', but was also permitted to Flakregiment 9 and Luftwaffennachritenregiment 3.

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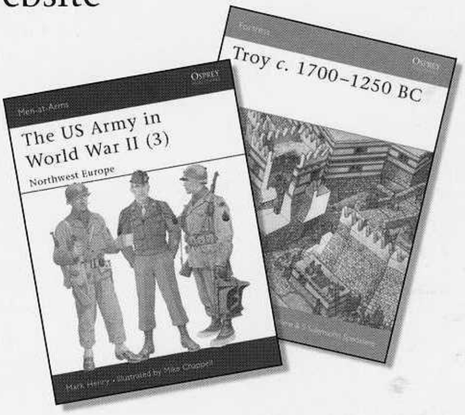
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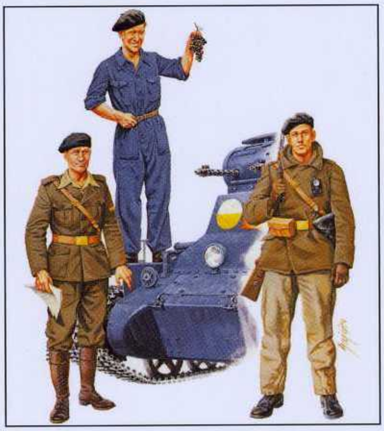

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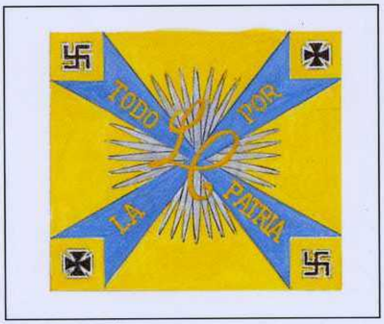

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